Smithsonian

January 1995

FRENCH BREAD

From the ovens at Poilâne of Paris come the world's most-celebrated loaves (p. 50)

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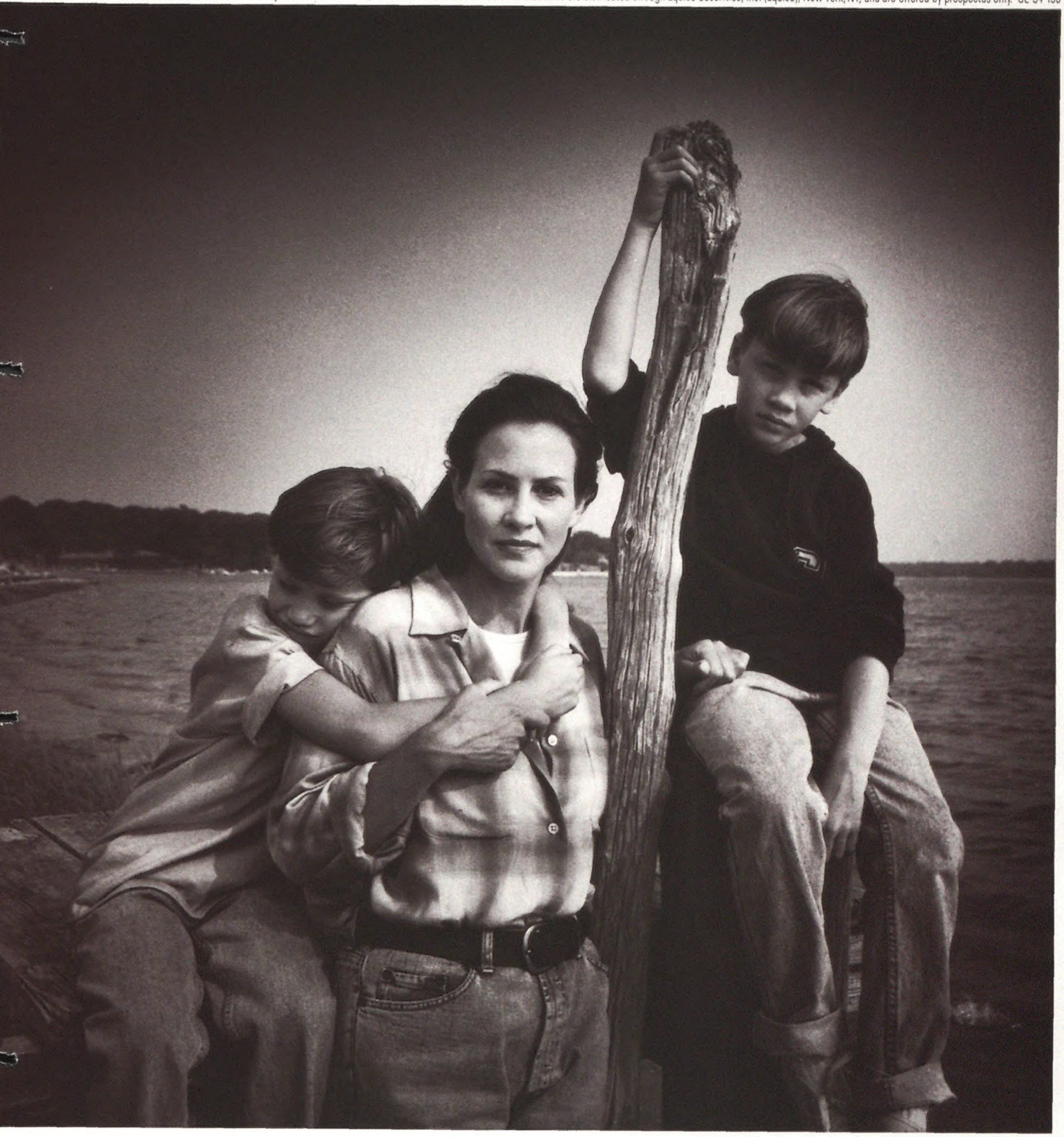

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January 1995

Smithsonian

Volume 25, Number 10

Table of Contents

Cover: Were she queen of France today and faced with feeding the hungry hordes of Paris, Marie Antoinette might cry, "Let them eat bread from Poilâne!"—a far tastier choice than cake. Here, in the inferno that is the basement of the *boulangerie* Poilâne, a sourdough *boule* is lifted from a century-old wood oven with a wooden paddle; 100 loaves are baked at a time. "Smelling a fresh *boule*," says proprietor-philosopher Lionel Poilâne, "like a wood fire, awakens in your mind the prehistoric beings that we are descended from" (p. 50)
Photograph by Brooks Walker

8 *Smithsonian Perspectives* by Secretary Heyman
10 *Letters to the Editor*
14 *Phenomena, Comment and Notes* by John P. Wiley jr.
16 *Picture Credits*
18 *January Events at the Smithsonian*

24 **Perry's prescription: 'Don't Give Up The Ship'**
The War of 1812 had been going poorly for America when Oliver Hazard Perry bashed the British on Lake Erie
By Bil Gilbert, illustrations by Arthur Shilstone

38 **'I was in the spirit world: images were alive'**
Robert Davidson, with fellow Northwest Coast artist Bill Reid, leads the rebirth of Haida art and culture
By William Severini Kowinski

50 **Hello sourdough, bye-bye baguette, *vive* Poilâne!**
Parisian baker Lionel Poilâne has generated a global appetite for his handmade, old-style, *real* French bread
By Rudolph Chelminski, photographs by Pierre Boulat

69 *Smithsonian Tours, Seminars and Expeditions*

70 **Goosey goosey gander, where do you wander?**
Often, only as far as the nearest American suburb, where resident Canada geese can be nasty nuisances
By Steve Kemper, photographs by Cameron Davidson

82 **From Mrs. Malaprop, a plait of fatuous-free desert**
As malapropisms—misapplications of words—infest our language, a bow to the ludicrous lady who started it all
By James J. Kilpatrick, illustrations by Keith Bendis

90 **Robert L. Ripley: Would he ever lie to you?**
By straining the limits of credulity, a shy cartoonist built a gee-whiz, show-biz empire—*Believe It or Not!*
By Donald Dale Jackson

102 **The beautiful baskets of Hiroshima Kazuo**
Bean paste sieves, eel traps and backpacks are among the exquisite creations of his long life in rural Japan

109 **A test of character: the life of Stephen Crane**
War and shipwreck, fame and scandal, the author of *The Red Badge of Courage* imagined it all—and lived it
By Ken Chowder

122 *Book Reviews*
126 *Additional Reading*

128 **How Sheriff Bob made me into an explorer . . .**
By Daniel Pinkwater

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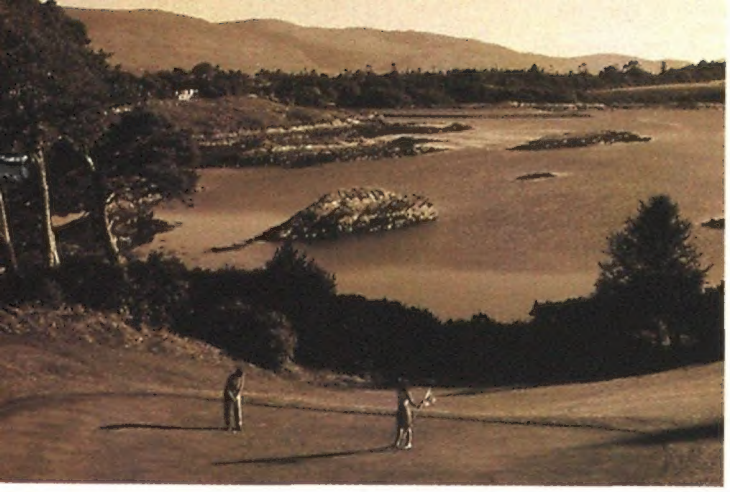

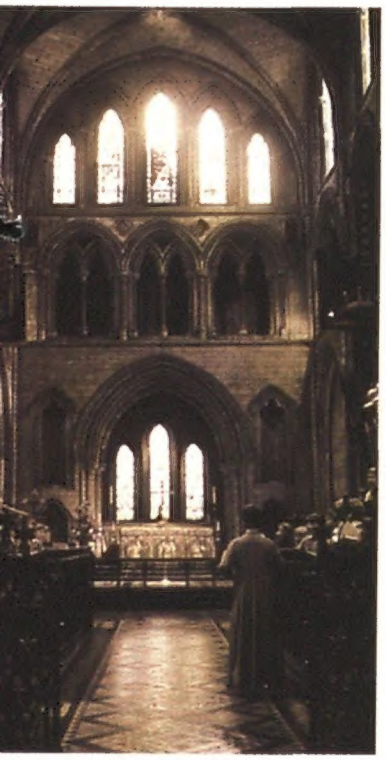

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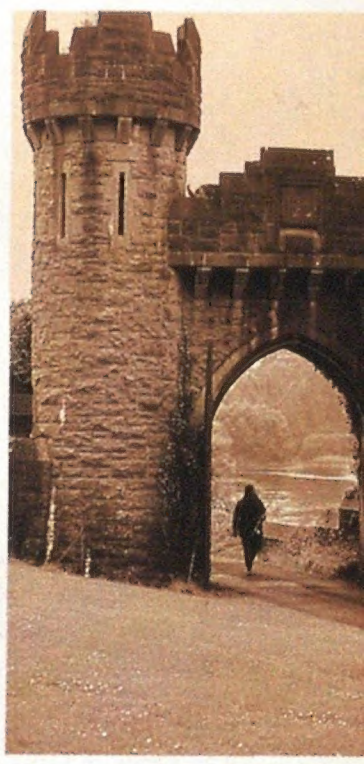

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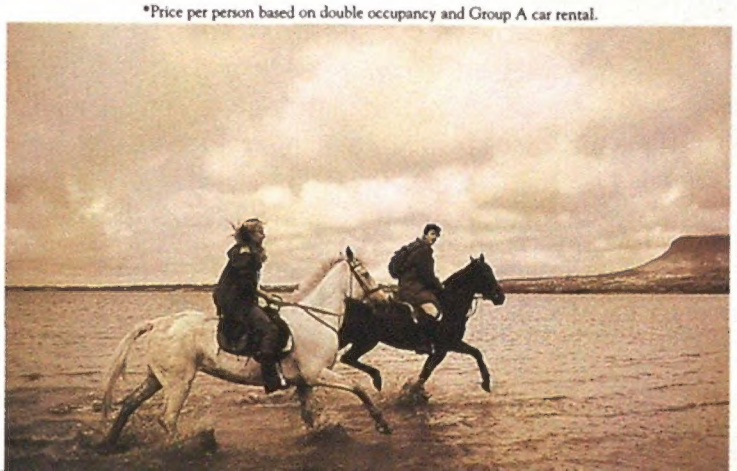

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Secretary Heyman's comments

Smithsonian Perspectives

The modern museum trend toward interpretive exhibitions presents both challenges and opportunities

Last month in this column I stated that the Smithsonian's new National Museum of the American Indian is coping well with the three major challenges that the whole Institution faces in this era: enhancing private fundraising, dealing with controversial interpretive exhibits and providing access to its collections by electronic means. Fundraising was last month's topic. I turn here to interpretive exhibits.

In times past, American Indian displays were usually grouped either by type, origin and age, or solely on the basis of esthetics. This was satisfactory for knowledgeable visitors; others, however, found such displays inadequate because no context was provided to explain the significance of the objects. This led to the placing of artifacts in a setting that gave broader meaning to the assemblage. For example, a diorama might present an American Indian structure with mannequins carrying out typical activities, using objects previously presented without context. The arrangements were organized from the perspective of curators, and rarely, if ever, of the people who made the pieces.

The National Museum of the American Indian has gone much further in its initial set of exhibitions in the Custom House in New York City, looking instead at objects and history from an Indian point of view. For instance, in one exhibition, 300 pieces selected by members of different Indian tribes are presented. In labels, recordings, photographs and so forth, the selectors tell why they chose the object and its significance in the culture of the tribe.

The exhibition is controversial. Some reviewers are excited about this new way of trying to understand American Indian culture, while others are confused by the juxtaposition, in another part of the exhibition, of Indian and non-Indian interpretations of the same objects or events. This new way of presenting objects and history is in the modern tradition of museum exhibitions. In the past few decades, more and more museums—of science, history and the arts—have tried to provide a framework for their exhibitions that gives context and interpretation. Various Smithsonian museums are similarly engaged.

One interesting example is the new installation of the First Ladies' gowns at the National Museum of American History. For generations, Americans made the pilgrimage to view the gowns, draped on mannequins grouped by period but with little commentary. It was one of our most popular displays. And then when it became necessary to restore many of the gowns, the decision was made to create an installation that described the many roles of the First Lady throughout our history. Most of our visitors see the interpretation as value-added. The gowns are now beautifully restored, but there's also the chance to understand the very demanding job we ask First Ladies to take on.

In my view, interpretation has an important role to play in a national museum involved in education as well as in the simple display of objects. Most visitors seem to like interpretive exhibitions when they are done well. Such excellence often involves taking a point of view or at least providing an expert perspective. In fact, we are sometimes open to criticism when we fail to provide an interpretation. A recent exhibition on World War II journalists evoked the plea from a reviewer for "some principle of unity other than that these featured thirty-two were in some way connected with the coverage of WWII."

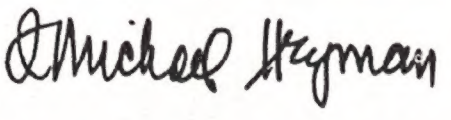
Sometimes, interpretive exhibitions create substantial controversy. This is not necessarily a bad thing—the public's attention can be gripped by sharp disagreement. But controversy can also be destructive to learning and to perceptions of a museum's integrity.

When is an interpretive exhibition a candidate for controversy? And how concerned should we be about it?

We at the Smithsonian are seeking to understand when controversy is productive, when destructive, and how to assure that our integrity and reputation for balance and fairness do not suffer. Guidelines are emerging concerning the influence that the Institution's Secretary and museum directors properly exert on the curators' choice and design of exhibitions; the processes for review and intervention; the extent to which historical exhibitions should speak within the context of the time; the ways to assure that our audiences feel that their own ideas are being respected; and similar questions. I shall explore these guidelines in the future.

Our efforts have gained urgency because of criticisms of some past exhibitions. But one planned for the *Enola Gay* has drawn particular attention, amounting to a furor. As I stated in my Installation address in September: "Our first script for the exhibition was deficient. Too much of the context for the use of atomic bombs was taken for granted. In this and other ways, the proposed exhibition was out of balance. This is being remedied as we consult with additional historians and interest groups. I believe that our final product will properly present the record of what happened and will be the basis for justified national pride in the sacrifices of our veterans, the technical proficiency of our scientists, and the productivity of our industries."

It is important that the deficiencies have been corrected. It is even more important that we learn from our mistakes by amending our processes of review and creating guidelines for curators that assure balance in presentation.



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Letters to the Editor

Carillons

Dear Sir: Jonkheer Jacob van Eijck, shown in the illustration on page 115 of your November issue, was carillonneur of Utrecht and its cathedral from 1623 to 1657, but is perhaps best remembered for a vast collection of variations on contemporary tunes: "Der Fluyten Lust-hof" ("The Flute's Pleasure Garden"), beloved of recorder players.

He was responsible for improvements to the city's bellworks, their maintenance and that of their playing mechanisms, and for increasing both the quantity and quality of Utrecht's bells.

His discovery of the principles of bell tuning was put into practice by François and Pieter Hemony. According to Van Eijck's biographer, his bell-tuning insight resulted in the "first musically satisfactory carillons in history."

Rob Gilliam-Turner
Charlottesville, Virginia

Dear Sir: Duke University's fine carillon was made by Taylor in England. I played it only as a student but was deeply moved by the expertise of others.

Probably the best student carillonneur I ever heard was Ken Jolls, who had a music degree from Indiana University. Ken was truly gifted. One afternoon he played Bach's "Chaconne in D," and everyone on campus simply froze until he was finished. It was the most magnificent thing I've ever heard.

Hilaire Belloc didn't know what he was talking about when he used the phrase "bells without fear." Climbing up on that bench, knowing that everyone for three miles around is going to hear any mistakes you make is, as my kids put it, "an awesome experience." Absolute concentration is required.

Richard Cummings
Annapolis

Dear Sir: It was John D. Rockefeller jr., not his father, who did so much to introduce the carillon to North America. He donated the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Carillon at Park Avenue Baptist Church, now at Riverside Church in New York City, in memory of his mother, and a slightly smaller carillon at the University of Chicago.

Joseph Clair Davis, Carillonneur
Riverside Church
New York City

Dear Sir: At Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa) after my graduation in 1939, my parents and I met my friend the student carillonneur, who had just finished playing for the graduation exercises.

I asked if I might show my parents the interior of the tower. We climbed the narrow stairs to the bell tower, and there, a sudden whim seized me. I decided to play a tune—and "The Man on the Flying Trapeze" boomed over campus and town. My father, a dignified school principal, remonstrated, "Do you think you should be doing that?" I responded, "No, but I've already got my diploma."

Eugene C. Bovee
Lawrence, Kansas

Erskine Childers

Dear Sir: The *Asgard* in the photograph on page 158 appears to be a yawl, not a ketch as your caption describes it.

William L. Rohde
East Chatham, New York

Asgard *does look like a yawl, since her mizzenmast is aft of the wheel. However, she is a ketch, because 1) her mizzen carries more than 10 percent of her sail area and 2) her mizzenmast is not stepped aft of her sternpost. Books on Childers describe her as a ketch, as she is listed in documents at Dublin's Kilmainham Prison where, a national treasure, she is being preserved until her relocation to a maritime museum.* Ed.

The Great Eastern

Dear Sir: The submerged rock that ripped an 86-foot gash in the *Great Eastern*'s hull lies off Montauk Point at the eastern tip of Long Island [below].

Captain Alan Villiers, in his book *Men, Ships, and the Sea*, wrote of the episode: "While riveting new plates over the damaged hull, workers reported a mysterious tapping. . . . Crew members

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listened white-faced, for legend had it that a shipwright had been sealed in alive while *Great Eastern* was being built. A worker found that the hammering came from underwater tackle. The ghost was forgotten, and the ship returned to service." But when she was broken up at Liverpool in 1889, Villiers noted, "deep inside the double hull, wreckers found the skeleton of the riveter who, said old salts, had jinxed her for all of her 31 years."
Peter E. Galloway
Wilton, Connecticut
Artist Peter Turgeon's oil shows the big ship steaming toward what is now known as Great Eastern Rock. Montauk Light is in the background. Ed.

Diets

Dear Sir: I can attest to the negative results diets have on the human body. Although our society is determined to measure a person's worth as the inverse of their waistline, I much prefer being full-size and happy rather than the miserable crab I was while dieting.
Susan C. Brewer
Gaithersburg, Maryland

The G.I. Bill

Dear Sir: The G.I. Bill was an educational wake-up call. Many G.I. Bill attendees were first-generation college students, including me. It showed the way for our peers and our progeny.
E. Gerald Meyer, PhD
Laramie, Wyoming

Dear Sir: I am one of the lucky veterans for whom a college education, through two graduate degrees, was made possible by the G.I. Bill.

Compare the $5.5 billion cost to the government with the increased tax revenues—an estimated $30 billion—paid by that "most educated and well-off generation in U.S. history." My guess is that the original investment was returned many times over in addition to taxes paid to the Treasury—in overall benefits to society.

Contrast that enlightened policy with our current system, where young people without sufficient resources must take out student loans, only to leave college and start their careers already burdened with a large debt. Might not a repeat of that highly successful policy be just what our nation needs to once more jump-start its lagging economy?

Pessimists will argue that today's young people are not as motivated as we veterans were and would not return as much to their country as my generation did. I'll wager this is not the case.
Charles E. Hendrix
Pacific Palisades, California

Dear Sir: I came home from the Navy to continue my evening studies at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, while working days to support my wife and our baby son. The strain was too much, and I was ready to give up until my wife discovered we could use the G.I. Bill to attend qualified universities in foreign countries. We sold our house and everything in it to get the fare, and we ended up in Australia at the University of Adelaide. The results were very positive.

We lived much more comfortably than on an American campus on the $75 per month, later raised to $90, in a large rented house near the beach. I received my degree in engineering, and the U.S. Government was charged only $35 to $40 per year for tuition over a three-year period. We made close friends who still visit. My wife occasionally wrote for the local newspaper or spoke to groups fascinated with life in America. Summer vacations, when no income was provided, I had local jobs.

The money we borrowed for our fare home was repaid within a year because my career prospered.
Albert Benjaminson
Kiawah Island, South Carolina

Dear Sir: The American Legion did not originate the G.I. Bill. Its concept was suggested by Civil War historian Douglas Southall Freeman to my father, Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, in a letter written in the fall of 1942. The colleges and universities, as well as parents, were vociferously opposing the new draft bill amendment canceling draft deferments for 18- and 19-year-olds.

Freeman wrote: "Many parents who realize the necessity of calling to the colors the 18s and 19s, are fearful the boys never will return to college after the war. Would it not be well for the President or the Department, on the day the bill passes, to announce the appointment of a committee to study methods of assisting these boys in resuming their college work when hostilities end?. . . We cannot afford a lost generation."

On October 20, 1942, immediately after receiving Freeman's letter, my father enthusiastically endorsed the idea and relayed it to President Roosevelt, enlarging upon the idea to include not

only those who wished to resume college, but those who wanted to enter college in the postwar period.

Roosevelt asked my father to coordinate with the Navy and draft a public statement. When he signed the draft act amendment, the President announced the formation of a committee headed by Gen. Frederick Osborn; it eventually wrote the first draft of what became the G.I. Bill.

Lee Seldes (Aileen Patterson Seldes)
New York City

Dear Sir: The children of servicemen killed in the war were also able to take advantage of Public Law 346. My father, Pvt. Willard M. Huntt, was killed in action on April 13, 1945, while charging an SS machine gun nest. I went to college on my father's G.I. Bill benefits.

Elenor Huntt Green
Rapid City, South Dakota

Phenomena

Dear Sir: In addition to harboring significant populations of birds, Central American coffee plantations also support unique assemblages of snake species, found in great abundance in the leaf litter under the coffee plants. Studies and simple observations indicate that these interesting communities do not survive as more and more plantations are converted from old-style shaded groves to new-style full sun.

Joseph R. Mendelson III
Lawrence, Kansas

Dear Sir: I started calling around to find companies carrying shade-grown coffee, friendly to migratory birds. Here are six: Emeryville's Aztec Harvests and Fort Bragg's Thanksgiving Coffee, in California; Pueblo to People in Houston; Allegro Coffee in Boulder, Colorado; Green Mountain Coffee in Waterbury, Vermont; and Seattle's Audubon Coffee. All have 800 numbers.

Fletcher A. Guthrie
Bethesda, Maryland

Living with the whales

Dear Sir: Alexandra Morton's belief that the whales in Echo Bay had come to know her suggests an experience of mine 15 years ago.

Every day after work I puttered out of Torrance Airport near Los Angeles for a sunset flight in my little 1946 Ercoupe, overflying the cliffs and rocky beaches of Palos Verdes peninsula and doing a circular turn over Marineland, to look at the dolphins and whales. I would waggle my wings hello, although neither dolphins nor whales ever seemed to take notice. But one day when I circled and waggled, they all stuck their tails straight up out of the water and waved them simultaneously. There were a half-dozen species in as many tanks. I could see there was not an exhibition under way nor were the tanks attended by trainers. Over in five seconds, the show never happened again.

Jack Romanski
Berkeley, California

Podunk

Dear Sir: Historical markers dealing with Native American sites cannot be trusted. "Podunk," rather than being derived from the sound made by an old mill, is an Algonquin term for "a boggy place." In Colonial Connecticut, a village of Native people along the Quinnetukut [Connecticut] River were referred to as the Podunk, probably because they settled near a bog or marsh. The Record of the Colony of Connecticut reveals the Podunk's rude displacement in the 1630s. They were told they would have to give up lands they had cleared for planting fields, and their village would have to choose another location. The Podunk quickly disappeared, victims of smallpox, displacement from their lands, loss of commandeered horticultural products and random acts of violence from the new settlers. But at least one of the children of Aramamett, sachem of the Podunk, married a person of another tribe that survives in Connecticut. Thus the Podunk are not entirely gone.

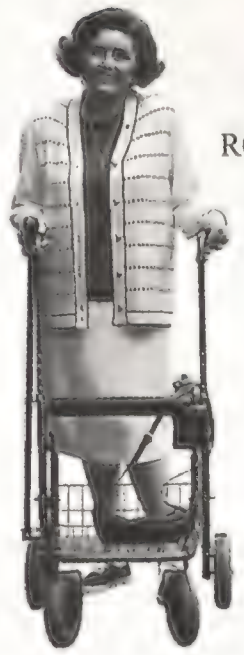
Karen Cooper
American Indian Museum Studies Program
Washington, D.C.

Preapproved

Dear Sir: I am still laughing at Mr. Kastner's "preapproval."

I, too, have wondered what made me attractive to that plan. I have no credit cards. How do they know I am good for $6,000? Or my late husband, who died in 1985 and still receives preapprovals? Since I need cheering up at times, such trust in us helps. I know now I am not just occupying space and paying rent but am a preapproved spender.

Marjorie J. Mehling
Santa Maria, California



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Phenomena, Comment and Notes

While Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 is history, space scientists are just beginning to piece together the details of its pyrotechnic encounter with Jupiter last July

Dark area circled by thin ring and a much wider arc of explosion debris is where a 2.5-mile comet fragment struck Jupiter. Arc segment roughly defines size of Earth. The smaller spot is where another fragment had hit the cloud deck a day earlier.

Both morning stars this month are, as always, actually planets: in this case Jupiter and Venus. Jupiter is so big that it can fairly be called a "failed star" (SMITHSONIAN, September 1974). Anyone who was around last summer, however, now probably thinks of Jupiter first as the planet that was bombarded with the mile-wide fragments of a shattered comet. During November and early December, Jupiter was too close to the Sun in the sky to be seen. Now it has moved far enough away to be visible, and we will learn more about what happened to our celestial neighbor—and could happen to us.

When the 21 pieces of the "string of pearls" comet slammed into the Jovian cloudtops at speeds close to 135,000 miles per hour, the resulting explosions sent up plumes of dust and debris. High-altitude winds quickly spread the stuff into a thin blanket over large areas of the planet. A key question is how long such material stays aloft, blocking sunlight to everything beneath it. Or, if such a comet hit Earth, how long would the resulting "winter" last? For Jupiter, at least, we're about to find out.

Many of the astronomers most concerned with such questions met outside Washington, D.C. in late October and early November. (The meeting was run by the Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society. The parent body meets this month in Tucson, with more sessions on the fireworks.) Scientists spoke of data radioed to Earth from a satellite just days before or cited a colleague's latest findings ("I just heard an hour ago. . ."). More than a hundred ground-based observatories had watched the fireworks. Thirty-nine orbits of the Hubble Space Telescope, far and away the most difficult instrument to get time on, were devoted to watching the final hours of Periodic Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9. And the Galileo spacecraft, which will arrive at Jupiter in December along with a probe, which will travel down through that atmosphere, was in the right place to "see" the whole thing.

The comet in question had been named for its discoverers, Gene and Caroline Shoemaker and David Levy (SMITHSONIAN, June 1994). Gravitationally captured by Jupiter, it had been in orbit around that planet (instead of the Sun) for decades and possibly a century. Working backward in time, celestial mechanicians found that the comet had made its approach to Jupiter inside the orbit of the Jovian moon Callisto by 1970 or so, and in 1992 it had passed within only 57,000 miles of the planet's cloudtops. The gravitational field of Jupiter, pulling more strongly on the part of the comet closest to it, actually pulled it apart. By May of last year, the 21 major fragments had strung out along 60,000 miles of the comet's orbit. When the collisions occurred just two months later, the objects occupied four million miles of orbit.

Astronomers knew that all the impacts would take place on the nightside of Jupiter, not visible from Earth. They feared that all they might see would be a momentary brightening of some of the inner moons. What they actually did see exceeded their wildest dreams.

In many cases, they saw two flashes before the main event. The first was believed to be either the fragment itself, heated by friction as it entered the highest atmosphere of Jupiter, or gas and dust in its wake being lit by the fragment. The second flash was believed to be the actual fireball, when the object had penetrated 200 miles or so into the atmosphere. This raised a plume thousands of miles above the cloudtops—and by this time Jupiter had rotated enough so we could study the plumes from Earth.

The best was yet to be. Plumes spread out sideways as well as rose. And then, pulled by the enormous gravity of the giant planet, the plumes slammed back down into the cloudtops, creating shock

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In fact, the "Geopardy" game has proven so popular that it was chosen as a city-wide teaching project, with sponsors donating geography-related prizes.

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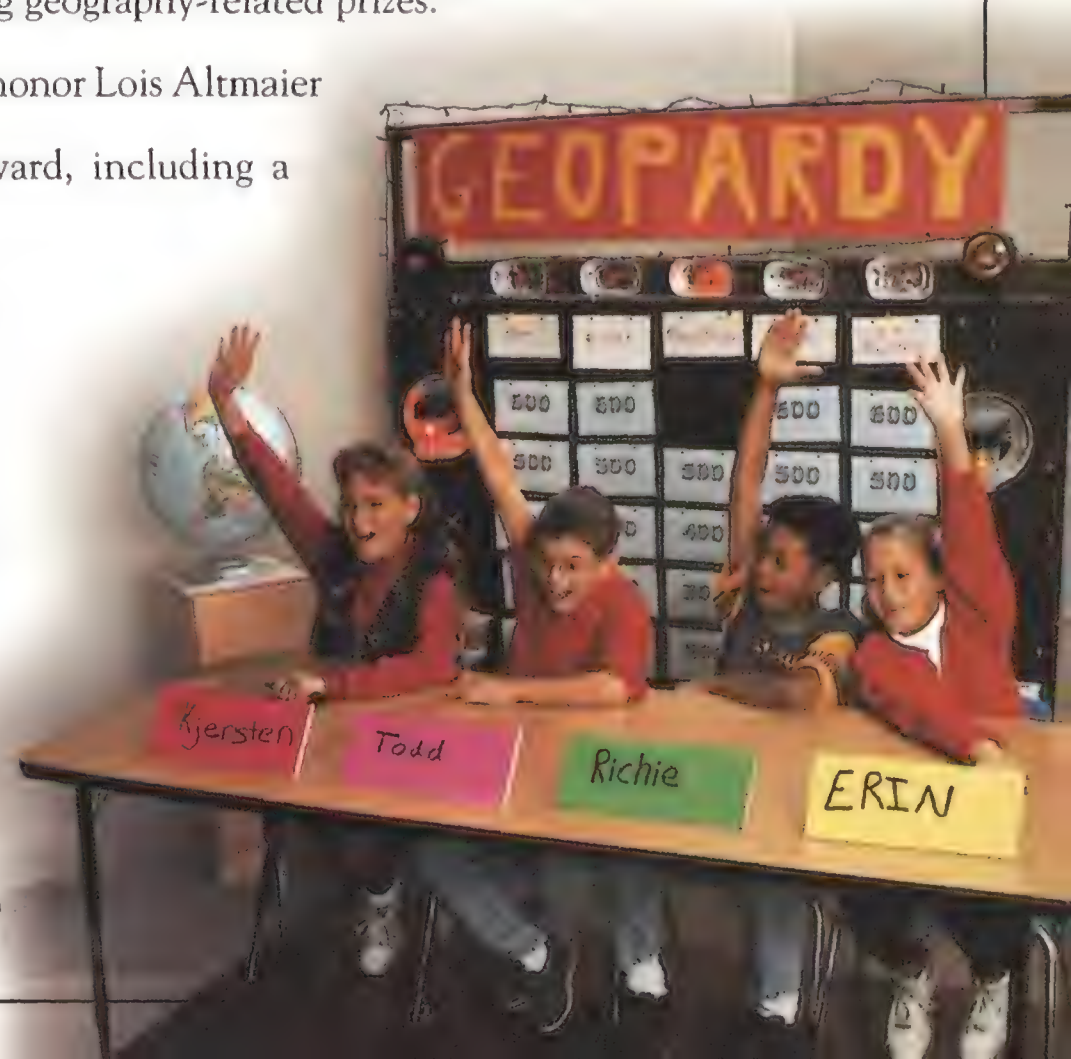

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waves that instantly heated those clouds to 10,000 degrees F. Spellbound scientists marveled at flares the diameter of Earth and as bright as the Sun's surface. And from those impact zones dark clouds—"brown gunk," as one chemist called them—spread around the planet.

As spectacular as it was, this kind of thing happens all the time on Jupiter. A poll taken at the meeting showed that 90 percent of those responding thought such bombardments occurred every 100 years or even every 10 years. And it is not unknown for Jupiter to break up a comet or asteroid before it hits the planet. Astronomers at the meeting estimated it happens every 150 years or so. They pointed to linear strings of craters on the Jovian moons Callisto and Ganymede, craters we will get a good look at when Galileo flies by.

As we all know, life on Earth is nowhere near so violent. That's because Jupiter is 11 times as wide and 318 times as massive as our planet. Jupiter is not only a much larger target than Earth; its much stronger gravitational field pulls in comets and asteroids that would go speeding by Earth. Those same poll respondents thought our chances of avoiding catastrophe are a million times better. Yet we know Earth has been hit hard in the not so distant (geologically speaking) past; craters are still visible (SMITHSONIAN, September 1989). While 12 percent thought three-mile-wide objects might strike Earth once every 100,000 years, 60 percent thought 100 million years was closer to the truth.

David Morrison of the NASA Ames Research Center supplied perspective. The postulated object that 65 million years ago caused a mass extinction, including most species of our beloved dinosaurs, would have been six or seven miles across. Comets or asteroids the size of the fragments that hit Jupiter, one or two miles across, would not cause mass extinction but would trigger global ecological catastrophe. Exploding with the force of 100,000 to 1 million *megatons* of TNT, just one such object would dig a crater ten miles across and blast enough dust into the atmosphere to block 99 percent of the sunlight for a month. Even in the Tropics temperatures would drop below freezing. Most natural ecosystems would survive, but crops would die, leading to the deaths of up to a billion people.

(If such an object hit the ocean rather than land, we would not be as lucky as one might at first think. Jack Hills of Los Alamos National Laboratory said after the talk that a two-mile-wide object coming down in the middle of the Atlantic would set off tsunamis that would reach all the way to the Appalachians. Washington, D.C. would be under 500 feet of water.)

In Morrison's view, there is a 1-in-5,000 chance that such an event will occur during anyone's lifetime. Or, in the language of the poll, he estimates it happens once in 100,000 to 300,000 years. Very rare, he concedes, but when it does happen the results are apocalyptic. "It is the only natural hazard that we could—in principle—do something about," he continued. If we picked up one coming in, we could set off a nuclear bomb nearby, nudging it into a slightly different orbit, one that would miss Earth by a comfortable margin.

Smaller objects would do catastrophic damage locally. Chris Chyba of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy said that the comet or asteroid that exploded over Siberia in 1908 was about 200 feet across and exploded with the force of 12 megatons of TNT set off six miles above the ground. It blew down all the trees within 850 square miles, an area about the size of Washington, D.C. and neighboring counties. The strength of shock waves required to blow down trees, Chyba pointed out, is that needed to explode frame houses. He estimated that such objects hit Earth about once every 300 years. Over land, he added, it happens once every thousand years.

Still smaller bits and pieces hit us more often. I had not known that in 1965 one exploded in the air near Revelstoke, British Columbia, with the force of a few tens of kilotons, the magnitude of the Hiroshima bomb. Trappers found meteorite fragments on top of a snowfield.

Morrison said that worldwide, only about 15 people or, as he put it, a work force about the size of one shift at a McDonald's, are trying to catalog all the objects that could hit Earth. They estimate there are 2,500 short-period comets or asteroids whose orbits cross Earth's. It could take 10 to 20 years to plot 95 percent of them, he said, "and a very long time" to get the last one. Gene Shoemaker heads a committee that will present its recommendations on the matter to Congress later this month.

Emphasizing that he was speaking personally, Chyba responded to the thinly veiled appeals for more money by noting that it will be difficult to find the funds for an expanded effort. Other scientists want comparable sums to study equally important global problems, he said, and there is not enough money to properly fund everything.

Meanwhile, we still have lots to learn from the pyrotechnics of last July. For scientists the excitement is in the chase. Take the most basic question: What *was* that damn thing? Just because everybody has been calling it a comet does not mean that it was one. In that same poll, taken by Prof. Andrew Ingersoll of Caltech, the respondents split on the nature of Shoemaker-Levy 9. Thirty-two percent thought the progenitor (whatever was there before Jupiter broke it into 21 pieces) had been solid; another 32 percent said no, it had been unconsolidated gravel. Not far behind, 22 percent voted for fluffy snow. On the identity of the dark clouds of debris around impact sites, nearly 60 percent thought they were hydrocarbons, but about 30 percent considered them to be silicates. "Will there be recognizable remnants of the impacts when Galileo arrives?" Ingersoll asked. Forty-seven percent said yes, while 51 percent said no.

This is real science: not magisterial pronouncements of fact for us unwashed layfolk, but the fever of the hunt, with the added enticement of not being certain of the nature of the prey. In the matter of Shoemaker-Levy 9, the fun is only beginning. Stay tuned. And in the meantime, remember to look up every once in a while. Just in case.

John P. Wiley jr.

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Smithsonian Highlights

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Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center's Associates' Reception Desk—open 9 A.M.- 4 P.M. daily—in the Castle. The National Museum of Natural History's Court dining room offers buffet service daily, 11 A.M.- 3 P.M.

Most Smithsonian museums are open 10 A.M.- 5:30 P.M. every day except December 25. Hours at the National Zoo are 9 A.M.- 4:30 P.M. daily for buildings, and 8 A.M.- 6 P.M. for grounds.

Musical Weekend

The 23d annual Smithsonian Musical Weekend will be held April 28-30. Highlights will include performances by the Miami City Ballet and the Smithsonian's Chamber Music Society; dinners at the Arts and Industries Building and the Arts Club of Washington; and an opportunity to visit the Smithsonian Craft Show. For information, call (202) 973-2118.

Special January exhibits, events

S. Dillon Ripley Center, International Gallery
Wenceslaus Hollar: Seventeenth-Century Prints from the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (through January 23) Engravings by the 17th-century Bohemian artist. See *Highlights Continued*, page 20.

National Air and Space Museum
Aerial Inspirations: Silk Batiks by Mary Edna Fraser (through June 4) Large-scale silk batiks portray artist's vision of land, sea and sky.
Where Next, Columbus? Permanent exhibition looks ahead to the next 500 years of space exploration.

National Museum of Natural History
Gem and Mineral Hall (closes January 3) The Gem and Mineral Hall will be closed for renovation until December 1996. The Hope Diamond will be on view on the second floor of the Rotunda.
Giant Squids New exhibit showcases the world's largest invertebrates.

National Zoological Park
Amazonia Permanent installation re-creates a microcosm of the world's largest rain forest and river habitat.

National Museum of American History
Science in American Life New exhibition tracks advances and discoveries in science over the past 125 years.
First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image Permanent show looks at the various roles of our nation's First Ladies.

National Postal Museum
Located next to Union Station on Capitol Hill, the new museum presents exhibitions tracing the history of the nation's mail service—from the Colonial Post and Pony Express to the beauty and lore of stamps.

Freer Gallery of Art
Masterpieces of Chinese Calligraphy (through February 19) Works represent all four major scripts and the four primary formats.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
A Basketmaker in Rural Japan (through July 9) Woven backpacks, fishing creels, and containers by Japanese basketmaker Hiroshima Kazuo. See page 102.

National Museum of African Art
Mohammad Omer Khalil, Etchings/Amir I. M. Nour, Sculpture (through February 26) Works by two contemporary Sudanese artists.

National Museum of American Art
Free Within Ourselves: African American Art from the Museum's Collection (through February 26) Paintings, sculpture, folk art, works on paper and photographs by nearly 100 artists.

Renwick Gallery
Contemporary Crafts and the Saxe Collection (through February 5) The studio craft collection of George and Dorothy Saxe.

National Portrait Gallery
Points of View: Single Subject/Multiple Artists (through February 20) Portraits of 16 sitters by more than 50 artists, from Alexander Calder to Andy Warhol.
Federal Profiles: Saint-Mémin in America, 1793-1814 (through May 29) Portraits by the French artist.

Anacostia Museum
In Search of Common Ground: Senior Citizens and Community Life at Potomac Gardens (through January 15) Shared experiences of ten black families who migrated from the rural South to Washington, D.C. in the 1930s-'50s.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Bruce Nauman (through January 29) The work of one of the most rigorously experimental American artists of the past 25 years—video installations, sculptures, neon, photographs.

Arts and Industries Building
Imagining Families: Images and Voices (through February) Inaugural exhibition of the National African American Museum Project presents the work of 15 American photobiographer-artists.
Discovery Theater
Much Ado About Hamlet (through January 21) Performances: Tuesday-Friday, 10 and 11:30 A.M.; Saturday, 11:30 A.M. and 1 P.M. Live theater for young audiences. Call (202) 357-1500 (voice or TTY).

Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian (New York)
Creation's Journey: Masterworks of Native American Identity and Belief (runs indefinitely) One of three inaugural exhibits celebrating the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum (New York)
The Structure of Style: Modernism in Dutch Applied Arts 1880-1930 (through February 19) Turn-of-the-century Dutch decorative and applied arts.

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Highlights Continued

The exacting eye of Wenceslaus Hollar

The delicate patterning of lace, the texture and feel of fine fabric, the particulars of butterflies and beetles, moths and moles, of stately warships and plodding barges, of hounds and hares, beggars and kings, cityscapes and countryscapes, flowers, fans and furs. There was no subject too humble, no panorama too grand, for the exacting eye and skillful hand of 17th-century Bohemian printmaker Wenceslaus Hollar. His technical mastery and meticulous rendering of detail distinguished him as one of the finest practitioners of his art, at its height in Western Europe in the 17th century. Although he had no formal training, his work won the praise of contemporaries and set a standard of excellence to which many aspired. In a career that spanned half a century, he created more than 2,700 drawings and prints.

A selection of these works is currently on view at the Smithsonian's International Gallery in the S. Dillon Ripley Center through January 23. "Wenceslaus Hollar: Seventeenth-Century Prints from the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam" spotlights Hollar's art and surveys European printmaking of the era. Organized and circulated by Art Services International of Alexandria, Virginia, the show offers a firsthand look at everyday life in 17th-century Europe.

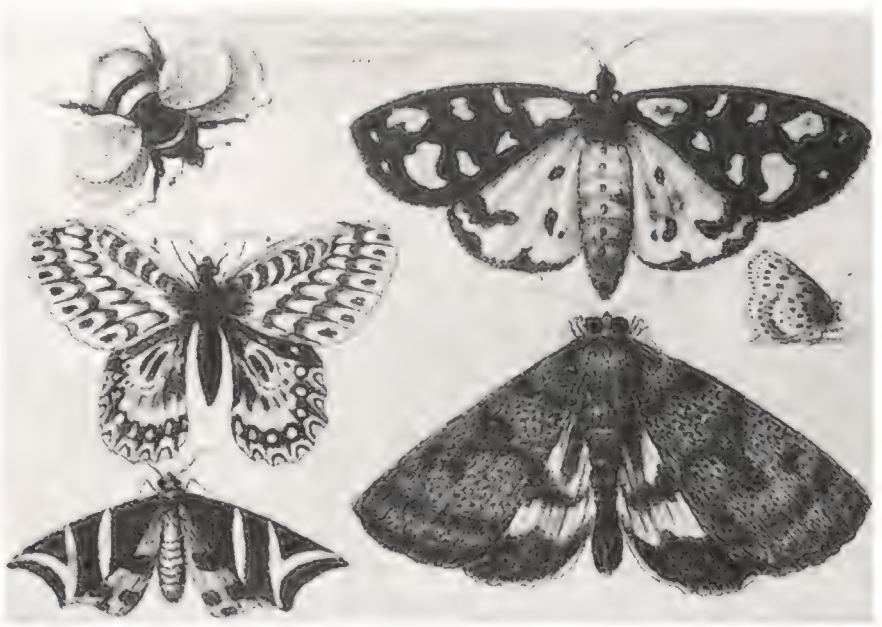
Born in Prague in 1607, Hollar spent his early years in that city. It was there that his prodigious talent for copy work, topography and mapmaking were first evident. In 1627 he embarked on a lifelong course of travel in search of employment and subjects. From the tiled rooftops of Tangier to the crenelated parapets and celebrated towers of London, the dispassionate reporter produced an invaluable record of the landscape, people, places, architecture, art and accouterments of his time.
Diane M. Bolz

Hollar self-portrait includes view of Prague, engraving tools, copper plate.

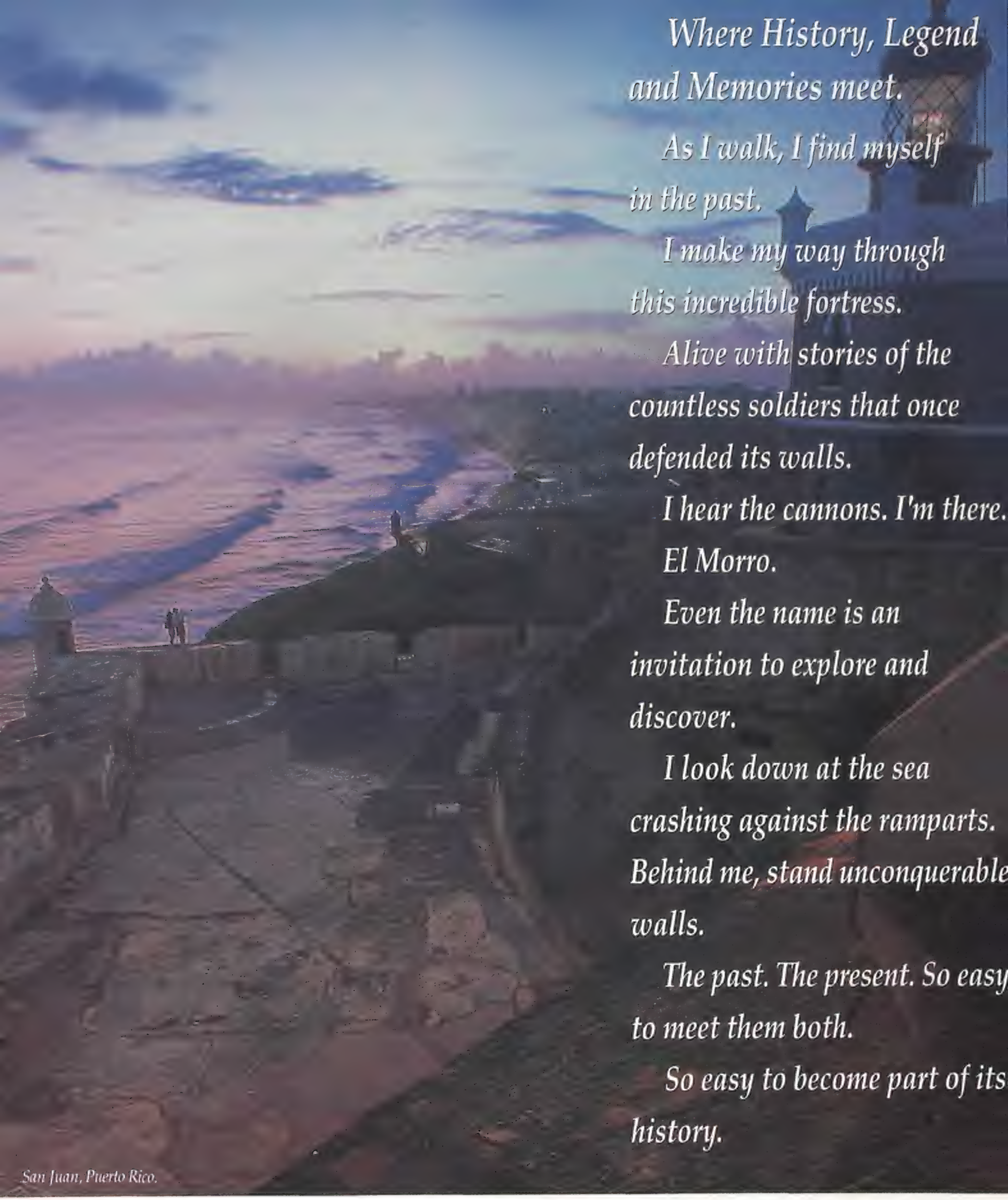
St. Paul's. The Nave (1658) documents the London cathedral before Great Fire, 1666.

Part of series personifying the seasons, *Winter* (detail) was created in 1644.

Likely intended as a model for use by other artists, *Six Hounds* (1646) was based on work by Flemish artist Pieter van Avont.



Three Moths, Two Butterflies, and a Bumblebee (1646) is clever copy of watercolor (now lost) from noted British collection.



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By Bil Gilbert

The Battle of Lake Erie

We were floundering in the War of 1812 when young Captain Perry came up with a winning motto, 'Don't Give Up The Ship'

Many who lived at the time noted—as have most subsequent historians—that the War of 1812 was a festival of contradictions, anomalies and absurdities.

It was the first war that the new United States of America declared, and arguably the most senseless. We were ill-prepared for it. It was ill-conceived and often ill-conducted. During its course our capital was captured and put to the torch. It ended in a stalemate. Large sections of the country were against it; some New England states, their trade cut off by an embargo and their ships rotting in harbor, actually threatened to secede.

As with most wars, though, what we remember is not the failed policies, the foolishness and the confusion, but a few heroic moments. And one of the most heroic offers the vision of a young man being rowed across green waters slashed white by enemy shot and bearing aloft a large, navy-blue battle flag on which are the words "Don't Give Up The Ship." The date was September 10, 1813. The man was Oliver Hazard Perry. Just how he came to be in a historic naval battle fought by pickup crews in hastily built ships on Lake Erie, 500 miles from the sea, requires some telling.

James Madison, the President who led us into that war, was against war in general. He was also against having any serious army or navy. An Anti-Federalist, he saw armed forces as expensive and dangerous. Their exis-

Bearing his now famous flag, Perry was rowed through enemy fire to continue the fight from the *Niagara*.

Illustrations by Arthur Shilstone

tence placed a dangerous amount of power in the hands of the federal government and encouraged rash international adventures. Ostensibly the war was fought to stop the British from interfering with American men and ships on the high seas; the British were fighting Napoleon at the time and felt entitled to impress American seamen. Madison first tried to discourage them with economic sanctions, failed and got boxed into the war. He was also pressured by the "War Hawks," most notably Southerners like South Carolina's John C. Calhoun and Westerners like Henry Clay of Kentucky. In the Congress the War Hawks called for a crusade to defend America's "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." But they had a big constituency of backwoods settlers in what is now the Midwest, with far more down-to-earth war aims. Their slogan was "On to Canada."

In 1812 Westerners coveted central and western Ontario—what was known as Upper Canada—partly because the land was rich and fertile, partly for vengeance. For nearly 50 years they had fared badly in a sporadic guerrilla war with the Indians. Shawnee and Miami warriors and their allies were better adapted than were the settlers to fight forest wars. For the settlers, however, the explanation for why Indian raiders were so formidable was summed up by a newspaper of the time: "We have had but one opinion as to the cause of the depredations of the Indians. They are instigated and supported by the British in Canada."

According to War Hawk theory, the great naval superiority of the British was irrelevant. The war would be fought, and quickly won, on land. Faced with the loss of much of their Canadian holdings and revenues, the British, so the War Hawk scenario went, would swiftly sue for peace. No less a person than Thomas Jefferson averred that taking Canada would be a "mere matter of marching" north. Henry Clay predicted that the Kentucky militia alone could easily occupy Upper Canada. As it turned out, American militia were not able to do so. Worse, they couldn't protect large sections of the United States. Which was what, in a roundabout way, brought young Perry to Lake Erie.

Just before the outbreak of war, an army of some 1,500 men was being mustered in the Northwest, near Dayton, Ohio. Mainly militia, the contingent was commanded by Brig. Gen. William Hull, a 59-year-old, ailing Revolutionary War veteran and the federal governor of the Michigan Territory. If and when war came, it was planned that Hull and his troops would invade Canada. On June 18, Secretary of War William Eustis set about notifying his Western field commander to begin the invasion. The dispatch was consigned to the regular mails with a "please forward" request; Hull did not receive it until July 2. This was the first of Hull's misfortunes. Just the day before he had loaded all of his supplies and his official orders onto a Lake Erie schooner bound for Detroit. While he knew nothing about the declaration of

Map shows battle site (marked with red star) and area fought over in first stages of the War of 1812 in the West. To supply the army of General Harrison at Sandusky, and to get his troops safely across to attack Amherstburg, the United States needed control of Lake Erie. We got it after Perry built his fleet at Erie and, in September 1813, beat the British off Sandusky.

war, the British did, and seized the ship, discovering the American invasion plans.

Thereafter he marched northward, crossing the Detroit River into Canada on July 12. His plan was to attack Fort Malden at Amherstburg, 18 miles away, the principal British military base on Lake Erie. But then he heard a rumor that 5,000 hostile Indian warriors were heading his way down Lake Huron in a flotilla of canoes. Hull retreated pell-mell to Detroit.

In fact, Hull's little army had been opposed by only about 300 badly armed and panicky Canadians and some 800 warriors led by Tecumseh, the doughty Shawnee warrior and politician who had long tried to organize the Indian nations all over the South and the West to join together in driving out encroaching American settlers. By 1812 that effort had eased off considerably. But to most whites, including, seemingly, William Hull, Tecumseh still terrifyingly personified the "Red Menace."

Now Tecumseh's warriors ambushed and mauled a few American foraging parties sent out from Detroit. Fearing that he, his men and the Detroit civilians were about to be massacred, Hull did an astonishing thing. He surrendered his entire army on August 16 to Maj. Gen. Isaac Brock. Later court-martialed, Hull became the only general officer in the history of the U.S. Army to be sentenced to execution by firing squad.

Pardoned by President Madison, Hull lived on, scorned as a complete coward. But seen from a long, somewhat contrarian perspective, few men have idiosyncratically influenced American history as much as William Hull. The judgment of his contemporaries—that the initial invasion of Canada failed because of his personal flaws—was probably correct. But if he had been a bit more competent and less fearful, it is conceivable that Upper Canada would have changed hands, and the 1993 World Series between the Toronto Blue Jays and Philadelphia Phillies might have been contested entirely within the borders of the United States.

As it turned out, Indian warriors elated over the fall of Detroit joined Tecumseh and began raiding south into the United States. Fort Dearborn in Chicago had already fallen; the garrison and a number of civilian refugees—about 100 people—were killed or captured. Smaller posts and communities in Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin were overrun. Five months later, while attempting to relieve the terrified citizens of Frenchtown—now Monroe, Michigan—a militia column led by Gen. James Winchester was ambushed on the Raisin River. Some 300 of Winchester's 934 men were killed—including 50 who were massacred after surrendering.

During the first grim months of war, the only major triumphs for the United States occurred, improbably, at sea, where superfrigates like the *Constitution* and the *United States* had some success against the invincible British Navy. But before long the British blockaded American ports and there was little the fledgling U.S. Navy could do about it.

In his hour of need President Madison chose William Henry Harrison as Commander of Operations in the Northwest. In 1811, while serving as governor of the Indiana Territory, Harrison had led a 900-man regular and militia force that fought Tecumseh's warriors to a standstill on the Tippecanoe River. Unlike the War Hawk politicians in Washington, Harrison knew the true value of untrained local militia, men whom he once described as about as dependable in battle as a mob "bearing sticks." While he now recruited 3,000 regulars and 5,000 militia for his Army of the Northwest, Harrison avoided using them, except for defensive purposes, until his few regular officers could instruct them in the rudiments of soldiering.

Harrison also came to a crucial strategic observation: there would be no recapturing of Detroit so long as the British controlled Lake Erie, over which they could easily supply their own troops and Tecumseh's warriors. If his soldiers were to advance without heavy casual-

After the battle, Perry, at 27, got command of a frigate but saw no more action. He died of yellow fever at 34.

Bil Gilbert, author of God Gave Us This Country—*a biography of Tecumseh, including his part in the War of 1812—has written many pieces for* SMITHSONIAN.

To get over harbor sandbar, Perry's deep-drafted brigs had to be floated with special submersible pontoons.

ties, a swift naval offensive on the lake was imperative.

The President and his Secretaries of War and the Navy were well aware of this. But there was a slight practical difficulty. The United States had no warships on Lake Erie and could not bring existing ships from elsewhere. A fleet would have to be built. A sum of $2,000 had been advanced to one Daniel Dobbins, a Lake Erie ship captain who claimed he could build a flotilla at Erie, Pennsylvania. And it was Oliver Hazard Perry who, in February 1813, was assigned to command the Erie base and any ships built there.

Perry, then 27, was a my-country-right-or-wrong patriot burning to be a hero. He had joined the Navy as a 13-year-old midshipman, and prior to 1812 served ably in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. Zealous about self-improvement, he was an inveterate reader of military treatises and classic literature. He was a man of great courage but was purportedly so phobic about cows that he would make wide detours around fields in which he saw one or even heard one mooing.

At the time, the U.S. Navy, unlike the Army, had an inordinate number of similarly competent, feisty career officers who had learned their profession in the post-Revolutionary period when the Federalist Party was building up the country's defenses. There were so many of them, and so few ships, that they had to alternate commands like miners trading beds in a boomtown. At the outbreak of war Perry was languishing in Rhode Island in charge of a dozen coastal gunboats. But hearing of the post on Lake Erie, he began lobbying for it. It was one, he had heard, that might offer "some warm fighting and . . . a proportion of honor."

Two keels had already been laid

In late February he headed for Sackets Harbor with 150 Rhode Island men, traveling through blizzards to the headquarters of Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commander of Great Lakes operations. Chauncey was a politically well-connected military bureaucrat who would soon become preoccupied with the activities of his British counterpart, Sir James Yeo, based at Kingston on the opposite shore of Lake Ontario. Well matched in caution, Chauncey and Yeo spent most of the war consistently overestimating the strength and aggressive intentions of the other and consequently mutually avoiding action. Chauncey held Perry back for more than two weeks and, when he finally let him go, kept 130 of Perry's men. Perry arrived at Erie on March 26 and found that Dobbins had already laid the keels for two 260-ton brigs and had commenced work on four 50-to-65-ton gunboats.

As a shipyard, what most recommended Erie was the Presque Isle Peninsula, a complex of sand spits and bars running for about five miles along the shoreline, protecting it from the open lake. On the shore there were extensive stands of oak, ash, white pine and chestnut, which provided suitable, if green, timber. Otherwise there was nothing much of use in Erie. Since the town's crude cabins were of wood, there were a few axmen but not one skilled carpenter. Everything for the ships—craftsmen, anchors, iron, cannon, gunpowder and shot, canvas, rope, oakum for caulking, medical supplies, navigational devices and tools—had to be brought from far away, sometimes by sled.

A meager cache of naval stores lay a hundred miles to the northeast at Black Rock, a small, besieged naval depot near Buffalo. Cleveland was smaller and poorer than Erie. The only true supply and manufacturing center was Pittsburgh, 130 hard miles to the south. Noah Brown, master builder of the fleet, later said that the "roads were so bad that I had almost finished the fleet before any [supplies] arrived at Erie." For four months Perry and Dobbins crisscrossed Pennsylvania and western New York recruiting craftsmen, cajoling Pittsburgh suppliers and bullying teamsters. Perry also kept bad-

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gering authorities for more men, including a Regular Army unit to protect the shipyard against attack. Eventually he got 15 marines and about 1,000 raw, sullen Pennsylvania militiamen, many unarmed or carrying antique guns more apt to harm the men who fired them than anyone else. Some of the militia flatly refused to stand guard after dusk for fear of night noises and beasts. Explaining his predicament, a militia captain reported, "I told the boys to go, but the boys won't go."

Units of the British fleet were hovering off Erie. Their commander, Robert Barclay, who had lost an arm while fighting against the French in Europe, had submitted a plan for an amphibious raid against the American shipyard. But the proposal was rejected by his superiors.

Perry drove his shipyard crews hard, often working beside them. By mid-June they had six ships more or less ready in the Erie harbor. Most formidable were two brigs carrying 20 guns each. They were christened *Niagara* and *Lawrence*, the latter in memory of Perry's close friend James Lawrence, who had been killed in the Atlantic while commanding the frigate *Chesapeake*. The smaller craft, *Ariel, Porcupine, Scorpion* and *Tigress*, carried, collectively, eight cannon. In addition, five Great Lakes merchant vessels that had been converted to gunboats had been extricated from Black Rock and under cover of a fortuitous fog, slipped past British patrols to Erie. Three of them, *Caledonia, Somers* and *Trippe*, added six more guns to Perry's force.

Too few men, too much fever

The young commander reckoned he needed at least 740 men to sail and fight the flotilla. But by mid-July he had only 120 fit for duty. Many were on the sick list from malaria or "lake fever," probably typhoid contracted from drinking foul harbor water. Perry himself frequently shook from bouts of fever. There were only a few trained seamen and commissioned officers.

Under heavy pressure from General Harrison—who was demanding immediate naval action—the Navy ordered 500 men to Sackets Harbor where, for the usual defensive reasons, most of these too were detained by Commodore Chauncey. Perry swallowed his pride—with difficulty, since it was large—and begged openly for these men. On July 18 he wrote: "I again ask you to think of my situation; the enemy in sight, the vessels under my command more than sufficient . . . and yet to be obliged to bite my fingers with vexation for want of men. Give me men, Sir, and I will acquire both for you and myself glory and honor on this lake or perish in the attempt." Grudgingly, Chauncey culled through those reinforcements and sent on 116 of the least fit.

By late July, having recruited 100 of the most promising militia, Perry had about 300 men. Despairing of getting more and bombarded by requests from Harrison to act quickly, he made up his mind to take the ships and their skeleton crews onto the lake at the first opportunity.

The *Lawrence* fired for more than two hours despite British broadsides that cut both ship and crew to ribbons.

But getting there was easier said than done. The channel leading out of the harbor was only five feet deep. Smaller craft could cross easily, but the two brigs drew nine feet. Unfortunately, Robert Barclay, having been denied permission to make a preemptive strike on Erie, had done the next best thing. Starting in early July he kept his ships just offshore, ready to blow the defenseless, immobile brigs out of the water if Perry should attempt to somehow haul them across the bar.

When Perry left her to command the *Niagara*, 22 of 102 men were dead, 61 wounded. Only 20 were fit for duty.

Thus "bearded" by Barclay, as Perry wrote, he spent July hoping for some miracle to allow escape. One occurred on the last day of the month when, after dark, Barclay sailed away. He never explained why he did so; perhaps he ran short of provisions. Curiously, the matter was ignored at his court-martial, which occurred a year later. However, residents of Port Dover, Canada, openly gossiped that Barclay, bored with the blockade, returned to spend a few pleasant days with an attractive widow of previous acquaintance. It was said that at a dinner in her company, he bragged: "I expect to find the Yankee brigs hard and fast on the bar at Erie when I return, in which predicament it will be but a small job to destroy them."

As dawn broke on Sunday, August 1, astonished lookouts reported that for the first time in weeks no British sails were in sight. Perry feared a trap of some sort, but this looked like the only chance he would get. Led by the *Scorpion*, six of the smaller ships sailed onto the lake to provide what protection they could with their 12 small guns. Additional cannon were mounted on the peninsula's sandy hills. Having been lightened by the temporary removal of her guns and other stores, the *Lawrence* was slowly nudged onto the bar. She was accompanied by four "camels"—sealed pontoon scows. After being filled with water and sunk, the camels were connected under her keel to ropes and windlasses, then emptied with hand pumps. As they became more buoyant, the ship was lifted, but only two feet, not enough to clear the bar. So down the camels went, and the operation began again.

"Thank God! I shall be with you shortly"

Assisted by the militiamen, Perry's ailing crews kept at this backbreaking work for the next three days, in constant fear that British ships would suddenly appear. Barclay did not return until the morning of August 4, by which time the *Lawrence* was on the lake, but unarmed, and the *Niagara* was still on the bar. Fortunately, Barclay assumed his patrol was facing the entire American fleet and hastily turned back. Immediately after the *Niagara* was on the lake and both ships were rearmed, Perry sent a jubilant dispatch to Harrison: "Thank God! The other sloop-of-war is over. . . . I shall be with you shortly."

Because of what he did with the tiny fleet over the next month, Perry became one of the few military men of his time who has retained much fame. Yet, in retrospect, he had already done his greatest work: building the Erie fleet and getting it onto the lake at all.

As soon as Perry's flotilla was loose on Lake Erie, the balance of power there and throughout the Northwest shifted dramatically. Perry's appearance halted British shipping of men and supplies on the lake, to Amherstburg among other places. Barclay, meanwhile, having only one ship, the 17-gun *Queen Charlotte*, that could conceivably challenge the American brigs, had to take his fleet back to Amherstburg where, under the protective batteries of Fort Malden, construction of the 19-gun *Detroit* was almost completed. Barclay was now under even more strategic pressure than Perry had been to get this ship, and others, ready quickly.

Perry pursued Barclay across the lake and then returned to Erie. There he was joined by 102 more men, unexpectedly sent by Chauncey, including trained seamen and gunners. They were led by Lt. Jesse Elliott, an experienced but disgruntled officer who, it seems, had

expected to command the Erie fleet himself. Ignoring this situation, Perry welcomed Elliott warmly; Elliott was to command the *Niagara*, and to the dismay of Perry's junior officers, he selected the best men among the recently arrived for his crew. The flotilla then sailed westward and anchored at the mouth of the Sandusky River. There Perry sent a boat for Harrison, who had 5,000 men of his Army of the Northwest camped 20 miles downriver.

They took an immediate liking to each other and during the next several days agreed on a campaign plan. First, the British fleet had to be put out of action. Perry was confident that he had the ships to do that once Barclay had left the protective guns at Amherstburg's Fort Malden, as he inevitably must. Then, in their own ships and an armada of small boats that the Army had built, Harrison's men would be ferried across the lake and landed below Amherstburg. By the end of July, some 1,500 of Tecumseh's warriors were at Amherstburg along with about 12,000 members of their families. Thus, in addition to his own troops, the British commanding general, Henry Proctor, had to feed and supply thousands of Indians.

On August 22 Perry brought his ships to the Bass Islands, an archipelago off Sandusky and about 30 miles south, by water, from Canada. He sailed twice to the mouth of the Detroit River, to reconnoiter the British Army and give his crews further experience. But mostly he was content to wait until the supply situation forced Barclay to come out. About noon on September 9, having transferred artillery to the *Detroit* and soldiers from Fort Malden to man the *Detroit* and his other ships, Barclay left Amherstburg. At dawn the next morning Perry's lookouts spotted the British sails.

As in sporting contests, which are modeled on them, the outcomes of battles are usually predetermined by what the participants bring to the fight. Upsets, which are rarer than commonly thought, occur because of extraordinarily good or bad fortune, egregious blunders or phenomenal individual performances. For example, off the Bass Islands, in what became the Battle of Lake Erie, the Americans had a superior force but nearly lost by a mistake. They eventually won because of some good luck and a brilliant play, so to speak, by Perry.

Going into action, Perry's nine ships boasted 533 men and 54 guns, as opposed to Barclay's fleet of six, with 440 men and 63 guns. In regard to the weapons, the disparity in numbers was less important than the differences in type. The British were armed mostly with "long guns" capable of firing a cannonball about a mile. Perry depended mostly on his carronades, "smashers" that had less than half the range but could be fired more rapidly and accurately, with less powder and by fewer men. At a distance of 400 yards or less, Perry's gunners collectively could deliver a broadside of 936 pounds. The British could respond with only a 496-pound round. Barclay obviously wanted to keep his distance and pick off the Americans at long range. Perry needed to quickly close in. To do so, he ordered his ships to advance under full sail, and where they came within range, to attack a specified enemy vessel. The crucial matchups were to pit Perry in the *Lawrence* against Barclay in the *Detroit*, and the *Niagara*, under Elliott, against the *Queen Charlotte*.

While closing in on the British, Perry raised over the *Lawrence* his navy-blue homemade flag emblazoned with the words "Don't Give Up The Ship," purportedly the last words of his friend James Lawrence. The wind was not strong, and as Perry's ships approached, his men had time to ponder their fate. The carnage of hot naval engagement can be appalling, not merely from cannonballs, but splinters of wood that maim and kill, and falling spars and rigging.

By 11:45 Perry and five of his ships were in range of the British long guns, and the Americans could hear a makeshift band aboard the *Detroit* playing "Rule Britannia." For the next half-hour, though taking a heavy pounding and some casualties, Perry pressed ahead until he was within range.

Abandoned by a brother officer

At this point, the American ships having survived the British long guns, it appeared the battle would be over as soon as the *Niagara* came up to engage the *Queen Charlotte*. But to Perry's dismay, Elliott was backing his maintopsail to slow down and was apparently not about to engage the *Queen Charlotte*. Squadrons of naval historians have puzzled over this behavior ever since. There has been speculation that Elliott was jealously waiting until Perry was beaten so that he could become the American hero—or was simply terrified.

When Barclay saw that the *Niagara* would not be a factor, he turned his guns on the *Lawrence*. By 2:30 P.M.

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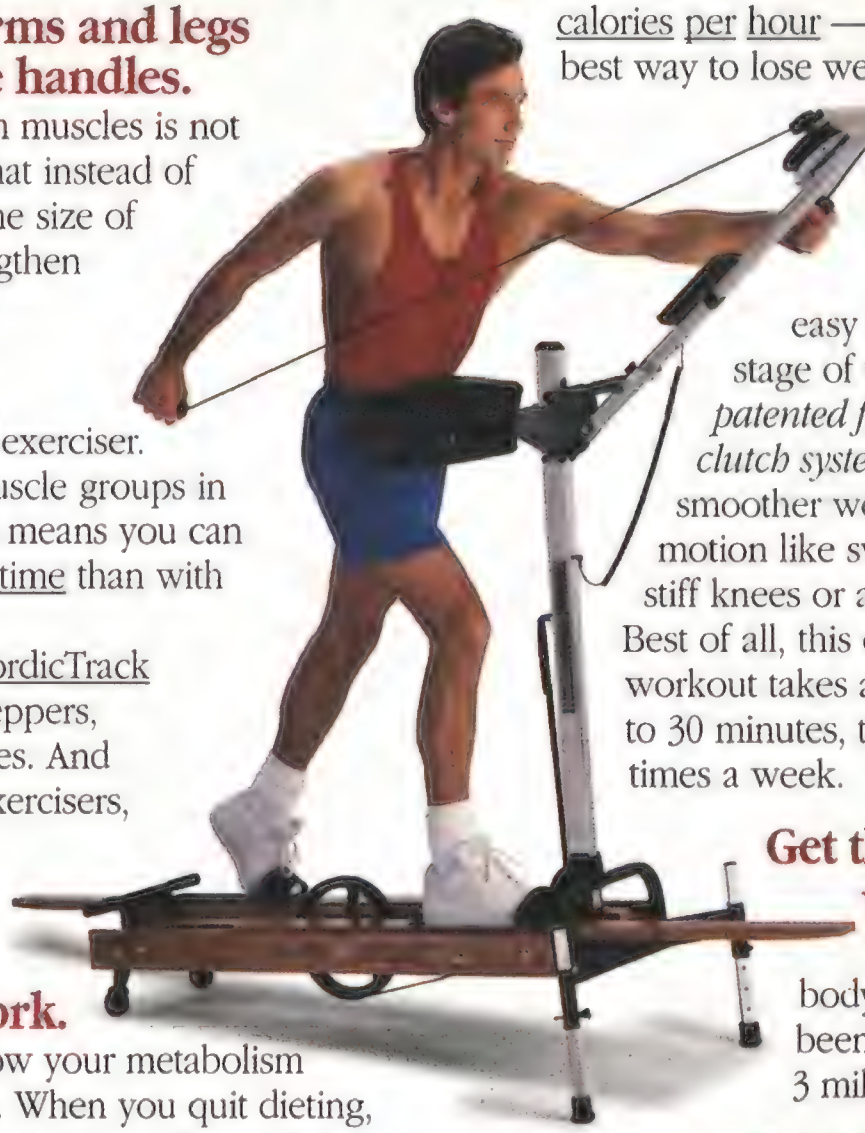

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only 20 of her 103 men were fit for duty, 22 were dead, 61 wounded. When the last gun on the *Lawrence* was finally silenced, Perry leapt into one of the ship's cutters, which had been towed behind during battle. Carrying his "Don't Give Up The Ship" flag, he left the *Lawrence*, by then a floating hulk, and under heavy enemy fire was rowed to the *Niagara*, where he had a brief but bizarre conversation with Elliott. The latter asked, "How is the day going?" "Badly enough," Perry answered, and only then did Elliott volunteer to go back and bring up the lagging schooners. Taking command of the *Niagara*, Perry sailed back into battle.

While demolishing the *Lawrence*, both the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte* had suffered considerably. As Perry approached in the *Niagara*, Barclay was hit, and his second in command took over. As the two British ships turned so their undamaged guns would bear on Perry, the *Queen Charlotte*'s bow became entangled with the *Detroit*. Finding them so handicapped, Perry sailed into the British line. With three enemy vessels on either side of him, Perry let loose with all his guns, delivering accurate double-shotted broadsides to devastating effect. The *Detroit* was the first to surrender, followed by five others. Perry returned to the battered *Lawrence* and sent that famous dispatch to Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop." When it was received and distributed, the message touched off a nationwide celebration.

Lake Erie was now an American pond. The Army of the Northwest was transported across it, and without contesting the landing, Henry Proctor, a British version of William Hull, abandoned Fort Malden and Amherstburg—and Detroit—rapidly retreating eastward. The enraged Tecumseh, who wanted to fight for Amherstburg, compared Proctor to "a fat animal, that carries its tail upon its back, but when affrighted . . . drops it between his legs and runs off."

With no other source of supplies, and encumbered with civilian refugees, the great Shawnee leader had little choice but to follow the British and screen their retreat. On October 5, Harrison caught up to them near Moraviantown, Canada, on the Thames River. Early on in the ensuing battle, Proctor and his staff fled on horseback. His troops, after a brief struggle, surrendered. Tecumseh and his 600 remaining warriors made a last stand in a patch of swampy woods. After an hour of heavy fighting they were scattered and Tecumseh killed. However, the recent defeats and difficulties had quenched the desire of even the most fiery War Hawks to annex Upper Canada. The victorious Harrison shortly retired. His career went downhill from there until 1840 when, largely because he was remembered as the conqueror of Tecumseh, "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" Harrison was elected as ninth President of the United States.

Perry left Lake Erie on October 25 and returned East, where he was feted as a hero. He was promoted and given command of the frigate *Java*, then being built in Baltimore, but the war ended before he could take her into action. Later, when Jesse Elliott began not only defending his own actions on Lake Erie but attacking Perry's performance, Perry responded in kind. Elliott challenged him to a duel. Perry refused and brought court-martial charges. However, James Monroe, by then President, intervened. In 1819, Perry died of yellow fever in Venezuela, where he had been sent on a diplomatic mission. He was 34 years old. Elliott, promoted to captain, continued in the Navy—except for a four-year misconduct suspension—until his death in 1845.

As to the War of 1812: the success of Perry and Harrison essentially ended it in the West. Elsewhere, fighting continued for another year before petering out. When it was over, territorial possessions, boundaries and maritime regulations remained almost exactly what they had been when hostilities commenced.

The British were still able to block our ships bound for European ports if they felt like it, or impress our seamen into service in the British Navy. But with the fall of Napoleon, the British need to do so ceased. Upper Canada was still Canadian, more firmly than ever. The power of the Western Indians never recovered from Tecumseh's death, however. And after the peace treaty was signed, Andrew Jackson shot the British to pieces outside of New Orleans, doing a good deal for national morale. Just by accepting a stalemate, it was argued, the British—broke and tired of war—confirmed that they were not likely to interfere again with the young Republic anytime soon. And that turned out to be true.

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By William Severini Kowinski

Giving new life to Haida art and the culture it expresses

Robert Davidson and Bill Reid rediscovered their past with the help of anthropologists, old books, tribal elders and a common ancestor

Wearing a blue denim shirt and clean faded jeans, his black hair gently edged with gray, Robert Davidson sits on a metal-framed wicker chair and paints with a sure flowing hand the canvas that rests on the top of a short aluminum ladder in front of him. He follows and sometimes diverges from the pencil drawing he previously made. A gooseneck lamp illuminating his work compensates for the dim light coming through the windows of his cedar-paneled studio on a gray late morning. A telephone is at his side, next to his paints.

Sitting nearby under the high shelves of paint cans, surrounded by partially completed sculptures and brushes, saws, torches and other tools, are two apprentices. Davidson keeps an eagle-eyed watch on their work as he does his own. At his back, just beyond the sign on the wall that says, "If we see you SMOKING we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate measures," is a small kitchen, with refrigerator, stove and cappuccino maker.

"You can put some music on if you like," Davidson says to Bill Kuhnley, the newer apprentice. The stereo system, fed by a cabinet full of CDs and tapes, is uncharacteristically silent. "OK," Bill replies. "What would you like to hear?" A pause as Davidson continues working. "Nothing," he says quietly. There is another pause, before everyone laughs. His comic timing is impeccable. "Bill is learning about bantering," Davidson remarks.

It might be the studio of any successful contemporary artist, except that the "canvas" Robert Davidson is painting is actually deerskin, stretched across the frame of a drum. And the sculptures awaiting completion include a large, elaborately painted, red cedar mask of a salmon head. Though the nearest town is White Rock, a coastal community south of Vancouver, British Columbia, the studio itself is located on the Semiahmoo Reserve of the Central Coast Salish people.

The designs Davidson is painting on the drum were developed over at least a thousand years by the Haida people of Haida Gwaii, the islands south of Alaska designated on maps as the Queen Charlottes. Europeans and their American relatives have praised this ancient style for its power and beauty since first encountering it in the late 18th century, but few masters remained by the time Davidson was born in 1946. Today, he is one of the most prominent among a group of Haida artists who are giving new life to this art and the culture it expresses.

In the process, Davidson has become internationally known. His tall, carved totem poles (p. 46) have joined works by Rodin and Henry Moore in the sculpture garden at PepsiCo's corporate headquarters in Purchase, New York. Other poles grace public areas in Montreal, Toronto and Dublin, as well as his home village, the old fishing port of Massett in Haida Gwaii. A major retrospective of his carvings, prints, bronze sculptures, and gold and silver jewelry recently completed a two-city tour in Canada, and he is the subject of one recent book (*Robert Davidson: Eagle of the Dawn*, edited by Ian M. Thom) and the author of another (*Eagle Transforming*, with photographs by Ulli Steltzer).

In his studio on the Semiahmoo Reserve in British Columbia, Davidson paints the deerskin top of a drum.

Robert Davidson's 40-inch-square *Eagles* symbolizes his own growth and the resurrection of the Haida people.

Yet Davidson grew up in the Haida homeland without ever knowing about the masterpieces of his culture; he discovered them only after he left. It seemed the old culture had vanished as well, but as he found when he returned, it was only sleeping in the hearts of the last elders who had lived it. It took a totem pole to awaken it.

Growing up in the mid-1950s, Robert Davidson had crammed into Massett's movie theater with a loud mass of other children. "You'd have thought the movie was a sports event," he recalls, "because we'd all be coaching the actors on, shouting 'Hurry! Hurry!' when there was a suspenseful chase, cheering for the good guys, booing the bad guys." In those Westerns, the good guys—the winners—were the cowboys, the cavalry. The bad guys—the losers—were the Indians.

Then one day, Robert's uncle took him aside and told him that he was an Indian himself. "All of a sudden, Revelation Day. I must have been 10 or 11. That was a real shattering blow to me. I didn't want to be those bad people. I wanted to win." Until then, he had been just

Davidson's mask of Gagiid (left)—"the wild man in our culture"—is used by the dance group he cofounded. Bronze frog (above), three feet high, salutes animal that "kept showing up at important moments in my life."

another boy in the small fishing village, living with his family—parents, sister and two brothers—in a one-room house lighted by Coleman lamps and heated by a wood stove. He knew he was named Robert after his grandfather Robert Davidson sr., and Charles after his mother's father, Charlie Scott. But there was a silence and common amnesia about parts of his parents' and grandparents' past, a gap that a child knows marks forbidden territory.

Though he felt no overt discrimination, there were intimations of differences in the conflict of his everyday life with the demands of formal schooling. "School was so foreign," he remembers. "I wanted to have perfect attendance, but we lived with the seasons, not by the calendar. We went clamming when the tide was right, not according to the clock. Also, at home we learned by demonstration, not by intellectualizing and hypothesizing. But there was no sensitivity to that in school, so we were always labeled as slow learners."

One thing he could learn by watching and repeating was carving—first from his father, Claude, who'd recently taken it up; and then from his grandfather, who'd been a carpenter and boat builder as well as a commercial fisherman, and who carved in both wood and argillite, the soft black slate unique to Haida Gwaii. His father and grandfather were unusual—there weren't many other carvers in Massett anymore. They would carve one side of a miniature totem pole, and Robert would try to carve the other side exactly the same. They were copying fuzzy black-and-white photographs of full-size poles that they had found in old books published by the National Museum of Canada; the pictures had been taken by an indefatigable ethnologist, Marius Barbeau. There were no actual totem poles left in Massett, and few anywhere in Haida Gwaii.

Because the local schools stopped at tenth grade, Robert had to go to the mainland city of Vancouver, where he lived with relatives of the local church pastor, to finish high school. When fellow students began to ask him about his people, Davidson became curious himself. Over the next few years, he sought out anthropologists and other experts, and he combined what they told him with fragmented memories and vague references from his childhood.

He learned that for an estimated 8,000 years or more, the Haida were one of a number of peoples that lived and eventually traded with one another along the coast of the present-day state of Washington and the province of British Columbia, as well as southern Alaska and the islands in between; the whole area is known collectively as the Northwest Coast. Among these peoples, the Haida were recognized as accomplished carvers and the best canoe builders.

The Haida had a matrilineal culture based on kinship and hereditary rights. There were two main groups, the Eagles and the Ravens; their members chose mates from the opposite group. Within these clans there were many subgroups and ranks that determined who had the right to pass on certain names and songs and dances. These relationships were maintained by potlatches—cere-

monies of self-government in which hosts gave gifts to witnesses to validate new rights, such as ranks, names and marriages. The people lived along a strip of land between the forest and the ocean in great communal houses made of red cedar. The totem poles in front of these houses, which faced the sea, told their family story through the crests displayed on them, and linked their lineage to the great figures of Haida mythology, such as the Raven, the Eagle and the Killer Whale.

Davidson also learned that, at first, the appearance of European ships eager to trade for sea otter pelts propelled the Haida to new heights of wealth and artistic expression. But after the traders came missionaries, miners and other settlers in the late 19th century. The missionaries taught that totem poles and potlatches were evil. With the settlers came new diseases, and a series of smallpox epidemics almost wiped out the Haida. From a population of about 10,000 at the time of first contact in the late 18th century, they were down to as few as 600 by the early 20th century. The survivors were bribed or manipulated into giving in to the European religion and culture, which seemed to have so much power. Potlatches were forbidden by Canadian law. Except for Massett in the north and Skidegate in the south, the villages were abandoned, the last totem poles left to rot. The last Haida took European names and lived in individual family houses instead of communally.

But before all the old ways were lost, a chief who came to Massett from his abandoned home village was determined to use his carving skills to leave a legacy in wood, argillite, silver and gold. His name was Charles Edenshaw, and he was the father of Florence Edenshaw Davidson, Robert Davidson's grandmother. It was her generation that was the last to learn the old names, the songs and the dances—the last to speak the Haida language. Davidson's parents were sent to boarding schools, as were the rest of their generation, where the last remnants of their Haida lives were wiped out. They returned home confused and disoriented.

"It must have been devastating that all of a sudden you can't speak your own language," Davidson says. "These beliefs that had lasted centuries were suddenly stripped from everybody." When Robert asked his grandmother why he was told so little as a child, she replied, "We didn't want you to go through the same thing that our children went through, so we didn't speak Haida to you." Now he knew that he was Haida, an Eagle who had been given a Haida name that he translates as "Eagle of the Dawn."

Early in his Vancouver days, Robert finally saw the artistic evidence of his culture at the city museum, which in those years was tucked into the Carnegie pub-

Davidson's *Wolf Drum* (above), merges Wolf's tail, a human face (left) and the heads of Eagle and Wolf. At right, *Put Your Complaints 'Ere* (1987) was artist's playful notion of an ear for his friends to talk to.

Bill Reid took Davidson on as an apprentice; their ancestor, Charles Edenshaw, had been a Haida sculptor.

lic library. The art reflects a life defined by sea, river, rain and forest. The Haida made canoes for fishing and seafaring, houses and boxes to protect themselves and their possessions from the rain and damp, and the other ordinary implements of daily life—spoons, bowls, ladles—as well as ceremonial masks and rattles, from the best and most abundant material of their world: wood.

Though they used alder, yellow cedar and other woods, the most prevalent was red cedar, from the giant trees that grow slowly for centuries, tall and straight, yielding soft wood that is relatively easy to carve but cuts cleanly across the grain. Besides shaping these woods into elegant, useful objects, the Haida carved stylized depictions of animals imbued with mythic dimensions. Using the red of red ocher, black from charcoal and green from copper oxide or clay, they often painted the carved and uncarved surfaces of these sculptures.

When Davidson first saw these objects, he realized this was "art beyond my wildest dreams, art done by my ancestors, art I did not know how to relate to, art whose purpose and meaning I knew nothing about." But its power spoke to him. "I was in the spirit world: images were alive—it was a déjà vu. I had been there before."

Inspired by these past creations, Davidson continued carving, learned silk-screen printing, and enrolled in the Vancouver School of Art, where he took classes in painting, sculpting, design and especially drawing. He also became an apprentice to the most famous artist then working in the Northwest Coast idiom: Bill Reid. An artist of enormous accomplishments, Reid was another link between the Haida past and its future.

Reid's childhood had some familiar parallels to Davidson's. With an American-born father of Scottish and German parents, and a Haida mother who was devoutly Anglican, he had been drawn to English and American literature, and the paintings of Cézanne and Picasso, long before he immersed himself in Haida art. He was unaware of his mother's Haida roots until he was a teenager. "My mother had learned the major lesson taught the Native peoples of our hemisphere during the first half of this century, that it was somehow sinful and debased to be, in white terms, an Indian," he wrote much later, adding that she "certainly saw no reason to pass any pride in that part of their heritage on to her children."

Reid was 23 and beginning his career as a radio broadcaster when he visited his mother's home village of Skidegate on Haida Gwaii. There he met his Haida grandfather, Charles Gladstone. And there he saw the carving and engraving tools that Gladstone had inherited from *his* uncle and mentor, Charles Edenshaw of Massett—great-grandfather of the not-yet-born Robert Davidson! It was 1943, and Reid had begun the slow journey that would eventually lead famed anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to write: "We are indebted to Bill Reid, that incomparable artist, for having tended and revived a flame that was so close to dying. . . ."

One day in 1966, the young Robert Davidson looked up from the argillite he was carving as a demonstration in a Vancouver department store. Looking back at him was an older man, Bill Reid, who by that time had become a master of jewelry-making in both the European and Haida traditions. A few years earlier he had helped to build a portion of a Haida village, including two traditional houses and seven totem poles, for the University of British Columbia's Totem Park.

The author, a Pittsburgh-based freelancer, wrote about City Pride Bakery in October 1993 and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in March 1992.

Their paths had finally converged. Reid invited Davidson to be his apprentice, then to live in his studio. "He gave me direction on all the pieces I was working on at the time," Davidson says now. "It really changed my style. It helped to refine my understanding of the art form." Reid encouraged him, helping him find work as a teacher. Eventually the two carved a 12-foot totem pole together for a private client. "It's quite a unique pole," Davidson explains. "It has two figures of very different styles. Bill carved the Raven on the bottom; I carved the Killer Whale on the top."

Though Reid was already established when Davidson met him, much of his most important work was still ahead: the yellow cedar sculpture *The Raven and The First Men* (below), now at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, and the first large bronze sculptures in Haida style, including the *Killer Whale* outside the entrance to the Vancouver Aquarium. From 1986 to 1992, though he was afflicted with Parkinson's disease, Reid designed and supervised the construction of what may be his masterpiece. The monumental black bronze sculpture *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*—represented by mythic Haida sojourners in a black canoe—welcomes visitors to the new Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (p. 47); it is the first outdoor sculpture in the capital by a Native American artist.

Differences in style and approach between Reid and Davidson were inevitable. "Both are meticulous workmen—their craft is what I respect the most," says Marjorie Halpin, UBC Museum of Anthropology curator of ethnology. "Bill is much more traditionalist. Robert is bolder in his work, more experimental." For all of Reid's achievements (now, in his 70s, he designs smaller works), he became only minimally involved in Haida ceremony. Yet this aspect of culture turned out to be key to Davidson's artistic growth.

Bill Reid's gold repoussé bracelet (1958) portrays the Grizzly Bear, an important Haida crest figure.

Reid's seven-foot-tall *The Raven and The First Men*, from Haida creation myth, is carved of laminated cedar.

A totem pole to evoke the old ways

After learning from Reid and from the work of their shared ancestor, Charles Edenshaw, 23-year-old Robert Davidson returned home on one of his periodic visits. Making his customary rounds of the elders' homes to say hello and help with the firewood, he felt a haunting emptiness. He had been thinking about carving a real totem pole; now he knew that he wanted to carve it for Massett, so the elders could experience once more some part of the old ways.

No totem pole had been erected in Massett in the 20th century, perhaps not in a hundred years. But the pole itself—which Davidson based on a Barbeau photograph—turned out to be only the beginning. The pole-raising was accompanied by a celebration, and for that the old songs and dances were recalled and resurrected. Though 89 years old and with failing eyesight, David-

Robert Davidson's compelling image of killer whales shows how Haida animals emerge from the fluid line; center design can be seen as a single face—or as two in profile.

son's grandfather had wanted to help carve the pole; while he couldn't continue, his effort inspired his grandson to complete the arduous work. Florence Edenshaw Davidson sang the old Haida songs she remembered and led the dance at the celebration.

The 1969 pole-raising became the first of several events Davidson would organize in Massett over the years—feasts, potlatches and memorials, or what his grandmother simply called "doings." Each inspired new artwork and gave him new sources of knowledge. He had learned much from the anthropologists, but now he had a richer base—experience. "I learned very quickly from my own involvement in feasts and potlatches that a lot of that information wasn't even in writing; it had to be demonstrated or performed," he says. "It's something you have to witness, and then it becomes part of you." His grandfather died shortly after the pole-raising. But Florence Davidson became even more active, making Haida button blankets from Robert's designs; at the time of her death, in late 1993, she was regarded as the most respected elder of the village.

Davidson marks 1980, the year he helped found the Rainbow Creek Dancers, as the beginning of his mature work. He learned the traditional Haida songs from tape recordings made in 1969 of his grandmother and others singing. The group, which includes his brother Reg (who is lead dancer) and his children Ben and Sara, performs these songs and their accompanying dances for special ceremonies, such as pole-raisings or memorials. Davidson himself sings and plays the drum.

Davidson then began to make masks, such as the salmon mask, not just as art objects but to be worn for specific dances. Once, when he returned to Massett to go fishing, he found himself silently thanking the salmon for returning and for giving up their lives for human nourishment, just as his ancestors had. But few others were continuing this old and profound custom. This was the inspiration for a feast he gave in Massett and also for the salmon mask, which his dancers used along with a new song composed for that occasion.

At the same time, his artwork became more colorful, daring and even sometimes playful, as in the painting *Put Your Complaints 'Ere* (p. 41). "Yeah, it's just a big ear," he laughs. "One day I was feeling excited about something, but everybody I visited had some kind of complaint. Later I thought it would be really neat to have a big ear that people could go to and complain."

Davidson remains not only a contemporary artist but a contemporary Haida artist, using the ancient forms as the basis for his work. "It's amazing; there's so much freedom," he says. "Like once you learn the alphabet, you can create any book you want." By using a flowing and connecting line called the "form line," and the basic shapes called the "U" and the "ovoid" (a kind of rounded rectangle), the Haida artist portrays, or suggests, the faces and bodies of familiar and mythic creatures. In this creative set of conventions, the Eagle's beak usually curves downward, while the Raven's stands straight out. The Bear stands upright like the human figure, but the Bear has ears and the human doesn't. When hands appear, they symbolize the creature's humanness. "The Haida believe everything is human," he says. "In their own world, the supernatural world, creatures look human. They only put on their animal forms when they are in our world."

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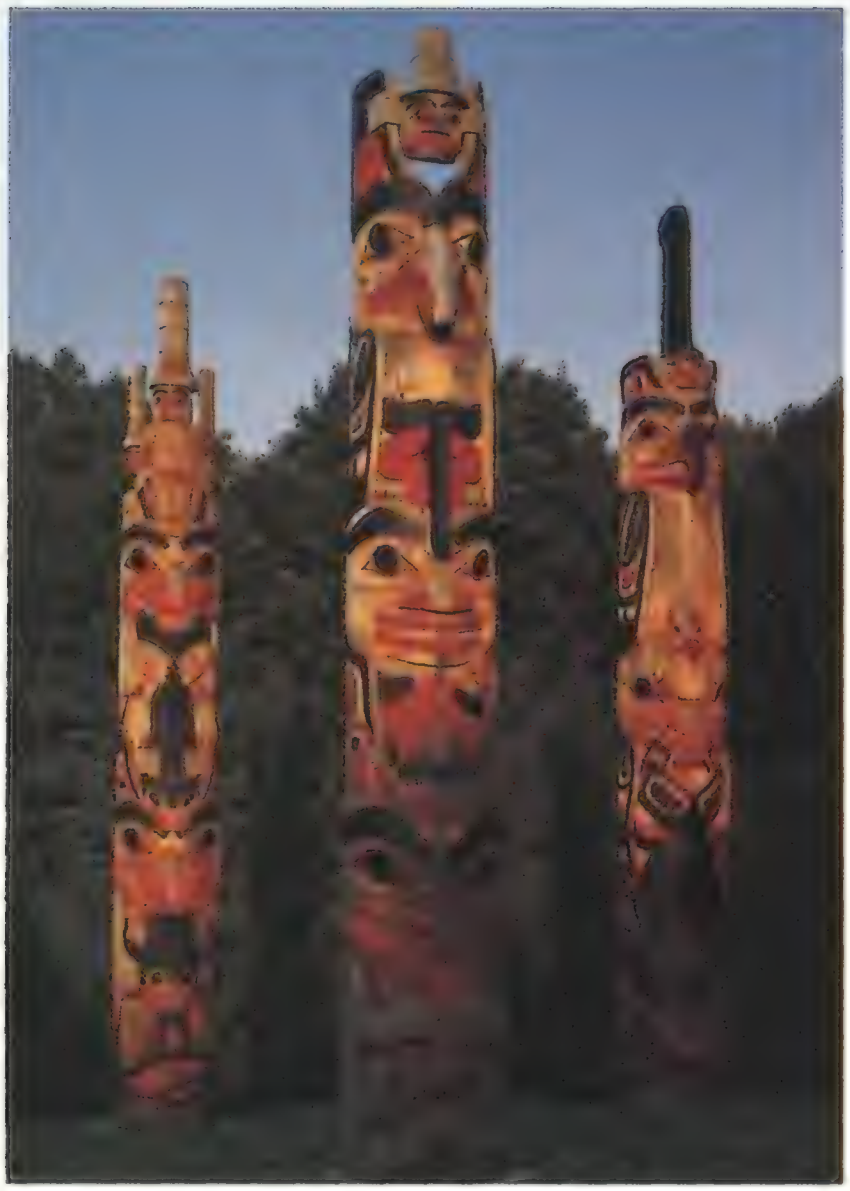

Davidson created totem poles, more than 30 feet tall, for PepsiCo sculpture park in Purchase, New York.

Sometimes only a head and an identifying feature (like the dorsal fin of the Killer Whale) are enough to symbolize a creature. The body parts don't even have to be in the correct places, and images may be repeated or split. Add to that the visual punning that permits part of one creature also to form a different part of another creature. For the viewer it all becomes a gigantic puzzle of images, a game of separating field from ground, or what is sometimes called positive and negative space.

Davidson relishes the complexities. "I love to do subtleties, to bring the viewer in. The element of surprise is always motivating." Although a knowledge of the alphabet of the art is helpful, as is an idea of the creatures, "you don't need to have a B.A. or M.A. in Northwest Coast art to appreciate it," maintains Davidson. "I want that sculpture or that painting to grab a person."

Many of Davidson's images come from Haida myth. *Raven Bringing Light to the World* was inspired by an important one: in a world still dark, the trickster and hero, Raven, steals the light held captive by a selfish chief, freeing the sun, moon and stars. This old tale, first illustrated by Charles Edenshaw, was later retold by Bill Reid and the poet Robert Bringhurst in their book *The Raven Steals the Light.*

Like *Raven Bringing Light to the World*—which he worked large in red cedar, bronze and gold, and small in a pendant, as well as in a painting, silk-screen prints and a drum—many of Davidson's most striking images are repeated and worked out in different media and at times on vastly different scales. "Sometimes I get stuck on an idea, and I really want to explore it to its fullest." Some images combine mythic and personal experience, like the silk-screen print, and drum, entitled *Southeast Wind and Foam Woman.* "I always look forward to being back in Massett when there's a southeast wind—it's a really powerful wind, it just dwarfs you," Davidson recalls. "Once when I was there the wind was so strong, the foam was blowing right over the road from the sea. 'Foam Woman' is a term that's used for foam. So I got all excited, and that's where that image came from."

He also finds that some mythological figures unconsciously call up personal meaning. Early on, for example, the frog came to symbolize his "spirit helper," the guide of the heart. "I don't know how exactly—the image just kept showing up at important moments in my life. My first real direct association was when I carved *Frog Soapberry Spoon.* I finished it sitting outside. I was satisfied with it and happy. I put it down on the steps to admire it, and just as I did, a frog croaked."

But the unconscious can be a key to cultural meaning as well—as in his terrifying mask of Gagiid. "Gagiid is the wild man in our culture—a person whose spirit was too strong to die," says Davidson. No images of Gagiid had survived from the past, so Davidson imagined what the wild man would look like. "In the old days, if a canoe capsized at sea, whoever made it to shore alive might turn into Gagiid. So I made him blue-green from the cold water." After he carved his first Gagiid mask, someone showed him a description of a Gagiid image given by an ethnologist in 1908. "I was amazed at how close I was. It shows that we all have that cosmic memory, that we are connected to our cultural past in some way."

Davidson has sometimes been criticized for going too far beyond tradition. But by personally tapping into the kind of cultural experience his ancestors had, he learned that culture is a process, not something frozen in time. "As I learned the songs from my grandparents, I realized that as much as they gave meaning to those songs from their lives, it was equally our responsibility to give meaning to them for today." That responsibility goes both ways: as Davidson once put it, "The only way tradition can be carried on is to keep inventing new things."

Bill Reid's masterpiece, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii,* greets visitors to Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

In November 1993, Davidson hosted a two-day feast for a thousand "urban Haida" living in Vancouver. They gathered at the Aboriginal Friendship Center to witness dances, get and bestow names, and trace genealogies on charts on the walls while salmon grilled outside the fire doors. "It filled an emptiness many felt," Davidson remarks, "to see that they weren't alone in the city. It freed me of Massett," he adds. "Vancouver has become my home." This past November a second feast was held.

Davidson puts down his brushes and looks at the drum he's been painting. New creatures have been emerging lately in his work—some of them on this drum. "I don't know what they are yet." He stands and stretches and groans. "I should get back to my yoga," he says. He's driving into Vancouver for a Haida lesson; he also teaches Haida dance there. But first he must change into his sweats, so he can head out to the rocky beach of gray sand for his afternoon run.

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Any way you slice it, a Poilâne loaf is *real* French bread

Forget the baguette. This legendary Parisian baker makes authentic sourdough boules *the old-fashioned way—by hand, over wood fires*

One wintry afternoon some years ago, an Air France steward on a stopover in Moscow was strolling with a Russian acquaintance when his eye caught a pleasantly familiar sight: there, in the display window of the Tass press agency, was a photograph of the famous Poilâne bakery on rue du Cherche-Midi in Paris. As usual, there was a line snaking from the minuscule shop out onto the sidewalk because, then as now, Poilâne is France's—for that matter, the *world's*—most-celebrated purveyor of old-style, handmade, oak-fired, thick-crusted, sourdough country bread. Parisians have been lining up for Poilâne's heavy loaves ever since the 1960s, and these loaves have become so fashionable among jet set gourmet groupies that they now regularly Boeing their way to Berlin, Riyadh, Tokyo and Chicago, whence they are distributed to such needy souls as Lauren Bacall, James Coburn and Robert De Niro. And good appetites they have, too, the groupies. Poilâne sells 16,000 loaves a year in the United States alone.

"Read me the caption! Read me the caption!" cried the Air France man proudly, doubtless anticipating some heartwarming prose about the unequaled gastronomic glories of his homeland.

"*The social situation is worsening in France,*" murmured the Russian, his nose planted against the window. "*The shortage of food is so bad that people are lining up in front of bakeries.*"

Oh, dear. Soviets would be Soviets, wouldn't they? Pity those poor Parisians, then. Suffer them to line up, clad in those tight Céline shoes and drafty old Chanel suits, and to tote those four-pound loaves in their laboring BMWs all the way back to the 16th arrondissement before breaking out their meager stocks of foie gras, caviar and Parma ham.

Souffrances of this sort are the commonest of everyday occurrences on chic rue du Cherche-Midi. If it was a snap for Tass to make an egregious misrepresentation of reality for home consumption, in Paris the news of the Air France steward's discovery helped brighten up a gloomy winter and provided laughter from one end of the city to the other. But without doubt, the one who laughed longest and most comfortably was a dapper, elfin, bright-eyed millionaire named Lionel Poilâne (opposite), owner and presiding genius of the immensely successful Société Anonyme Poilâne.

Everyone in Paris knows Poilâne, of course, but his celebrity is infinitely wider than that because there is a kind of magnetic magic to the man, his shop and his products. There is scarcely a gourmet magazine in the world, scarcely a newspaper food columnist that has not editorially sainted him. He appears routinely on French TV and radio, is regularly invited abroad and is harried by industry for all manner of collaboration. He is even consulted diplomatically: he lectured on bread at the University of Shanghai and received a Chinese governmental delegation investigating the possibility of shifting their country's massive rice consumption in the direction of bread. In Paris, every time visiting college students aim to write pieces for their hometown papers, every time newly arrived freelancers aspire to do features for the *International Herald Tribune*, they all unfailingly seem to be seized by a kind of gravitational pull to No. 8, rue du Cherche-Midi, there to stand in line with assorted Brits, Japanese, Germans and, of course, Parisians, muttering Ooh-là-là, this waiting is insupportable. But support it they do, because from his tenderest youth Lionel Poilâne, now a boyish 49, understood that his archaic shop and artfully countrified products exercised an ineffable appeal for the terrorized citizens of a world slipping ineluctably down the slope of history into a bath of plastic, plywood and public relations.

Poilâne's wonderful loaves are made from the finest of whole-grain, stone-milled wheat flours, seasoned with lovely light-gray crystals of pure sea salt, raised with natural yeasts, slipped in and out of brick ovens by real bakers wielding real wooden spatulas, and their tan, alveolate slices exude an aroma and taste that is positively fruity. Complementing the august loaves, star tenors of the Poilâne product line, is a rustic chorus of lesser varietals: rye bread; nut bread; a no-nonsense,

The toast of the town, so to speak, Lionel Poilâne displays wares under bread chandelier at shop in Paris.

Photographs by Pierre Boulat

Bakers carry loaves fresh from ovens in basement at No. 8, rue du Cherche-Midi to shop upstairs (opposite).

stick-to-the-ribs flan; brioches, croissants and chocolate rolls; a raisin bread dense and firm enough to clobber a midnight burglar with; stark, unadorned *sablés,* cookies that have never seen the shadow of a chocolate chip or felt the touch of a sugar frosting; and apple tarts great and small, so puffy and homey and unsymmetrical that they scream "grandmother's country kitchen" at you.

No cutesiness, no adornments, no merchandising. The bread is called simply a *boule,* because the loaf is ball-shaped; a flan is a flan and a tart is a tart, period. That alone is the first sign of quality in France, where the food industry has birthed an absolute rule: the more insistently bucolic and agrarian a product's name appears to be, the more surely it is mass-produced.

If there is one element of the national genius that still makes French hearts beat faster, it is eating and drinking, and in spite of the ravages of the dreaded *nouvelle cuisine* a few years ago, these particular activities have rarely been better served than today. With, however, one exception—bread.

The decline of French bread over the past few decades is one of the saddest aspects of the ransom paid to progress. The long, thin baguette and the somewhat heftier *pain parisien,* golden-crusted on the outside and chewily firm within, had been icons of Parisian identity for as long as anyone could remember, every bit as much as the Eiffel Tower, the gorgeously turned-out women and the snarling taxi drivers. The last three still obtain, but if the advent of premixed flours, industrial leavenings, factory-frozen doughs, refrigeration, and automatic gas and electric ovens has made life immeasurably more comfortable for bakers, it has also increased the difficulty of finding a baguette that is not substanceless and already growing hard and stale before you have finished climbing the six flights to your garret. Part of the blame can be laid to various dietary fads, but a depressingly large portion must go simply to good old greed. A generous-looking loaf that weighs nothing, made from cheaper, alabaster-white grades of flour and inflated like the Michelin man, uses up less flour and therefore increases the baker's profit margin.

Very early in his career, Lionel Poilâne discovered that there was plenty of profit in doing exactly the opposite of his confreres. His first act upon taking over his parents' little family bakery in 1965 was to thumb his nose at fashion and ditch the baguette altogether. It was approximately from that moment that the line outside his shop became a permanent fixture.

"The baguette isn't even a true traditional French bread, anyway," he explains with a shrug. "It began here only around the middle of the 19th century, when Count Zang, First Secretary of the Austrian Embassy, introduced the recipe for a Viennese-style loaf. What Parisians had been eating until then was the traditional round sourdough loaf—the kind we make."

At the busy sales counter, clerks in linen smocks take orders. Square pattern on each *boule*, identifying it as genuine Poilâne, is slashed on the loaf before it is baked. Shop has been a *boulangerie* for two centuries.

The slender, elegant baguette, clearly so much more *raffiné* than the traditional heavy loaf, swept into Parisian fashion and quickly created a lasting dualism: the first was indelibly identified as chic, urban and bourgeois; the second, as rough peasant stuff fit for clods and hayseeds who ate cabbage soup. If the round loaf still held sway in the countryside—often in 30-pound "wheels" that nourished a farm family for a week—it was soon on its way out in Paris.

One of the few who bucked the trend was Pierre Poilâne, Lionel's father, who in 1932 began renting ground-floor premises that had been a baker's shop for something like 200 years. A hard, stubborn man of Norman farm stock, he grudgingly made baguettes because customers asked for them, but his main item was the traditional sourdough *boule*, which gave the French language its word for "baker": *boulanger*. Rue du Cherche-Midi was a decidedly unfashionable address at the time, and the baker Poilâne himself was hardly any more prosperous than the nearby Saint-Germain-des-Prés artists who were so hard up they frequently paid for their bread with paintings, many of which now adorn the walls of a back room at the bakery (p. 50).

The author, a regular contributor who lives near Paris, says his equivalent of Proust's madeleine is a slice of Poilâne's sourdough with peanut butter.

By 1959, though, when 14-year-old Lionel left school to begin his apprenticeship at the basement oven beneath Papa's shop, many changes were about to occur. France was moving into the postwar boom that was to make it one of the richest and most powerful members of the Common Market; Paris' Saint-Germain area was becoming trendy, and a tremendous food-consciousness was growing. Like most things in France, this movement was double-faceted and contradictory. On the one hand it produced the precious culinary posturings of what one author baptized "*nouvelle* kiwi*sine*," but at the same time it led to a passionate search for authenticity, regionalism in products and a return to healthier, less-effete ways. Lionel Poilâne was waiting at his doorstep for this movement, and when it came along he stepped out, bowed and offered his hand. The pair have been dancing ever since.

Even if his *boules* and their ancillary delicacies had not been so wondrous fair, I suspect that the Parisians of the '60s would have flipped for Lionel and his shop in any case. The place is just so charming. You fall in love with the *boulangerie* Poilâne the way you fall in love with koala bears. The enticing display of bread products in the window gives way to a customer area that is only three yards deep and eight wide. Young women in linen smocks

Jean Diard, Poilâne's master baker, displays wheat from Marne Valley that will be stone-ground into flour.

skillfully navigate the milling throng as they take orders, hew the loaves (one may choose a whole *boule*, a half or a quarter, "well done" or "normal"), weigh the portions, slip them into paper bags, cry out the price for the cashier and, without missing a beat, ask who's next. The whole operation is so thoroughly, so outrageously outdated that it is like walking into a real-life engraving from Diderot's 18th-century encyclopedia. I have no doubt that if Michael Eisner could ever squeeze his stretch limo into rue du Cherche-Midi, he would not hesitate to offer a fortune to buy the whole caboodle—smocked women, waiting line and all—for transport back to Disneyland.

There's a nice touch of irony here because, in truth, Lionel himself is party to a certain manner of harmless flimflam. No improbity, mind you, not any deliberate deception, but there is a bit of flair to the Poilâne operation, since neither the homey little Cherche-Midi shop nor its identical twin on the somewhat less fashionable boulevard de Grenelle reflects anything near the full reality of his commerce today. Fact is, you might even call them "fronts," because the bulk of his sales take place in 600-odd grocery stores and restaurants in Paris and the French provinces—those that have been selected as Poilâne depositories.

The locomotive driving the action lies nine miles south of Paris, in the woodsy little suburb of Bièvres, where Lionel has erected his monument to sourdough: the huge, Camembert-shaped, 24-oven *manufacture* that is the heart of the modern, world-ramifying Poilâne enterprise. But, before we go any further, a word of advice: don't ever, ever, call the place a "factory." If you do, sure as rain, you'll be in for the pregnant-pause treatment. The F-word inadvertently slipped out of my mouth into the telephone the other day, and the silence that ensued was so long and so deafening that I wondered if Lionel had hung up.

"Hullo?" I ventured.

"*Manufacture*, I think you mean," he finally said. Crisply. "We don't use that other word."

OK, "manufactory," then, even if that has a venerably archaic ring to it. But those dynamite Latin roots *manus* ("hand") and *facere* ("to make") fitted Lionel's intentions too well to be lost when he decided to go for some serious expansion. His first effort in that direction had been the Cherche-Midi clone on boulevard de Grenelle over by the Eiffel Tower, but that had only whetted the Parisians' apparently insatiable appetite for the kind of bread he was baking. A second series of ovens, seven of them, at a family farm in the suburb of Clamart, proved to be only a stopgap measure. Early in the '80s, with bankers eagerly thrusting checks his way, he took the plunge into the major investment—nearly $4 million—that was to give the Société Anonyme Poilâne the nationwide, and by now even international, scope that has transformed it into a seriously profitable, $13-million-a-year business.

Teaming up with an architect, an aged *fournier* (a mason specializing in bakery ovens) and his wife, Ibu, Lionel designed and erected a unique hybrid, a circular building consisting of 24 traditional baker's ovens surrounding a huge central storage room for the foot-long batons of oak and poplar that feed their roaring fireboxes. Opened in 1983, the *manufacture* was an ingenious and elegant solution to the dilemma of how to expand without going industrial: a factory that was not a factory. The two Paris shops together had been averaging about a thousand loaves a day going full tilt around the clock. The *manufacture* and its 40-odd bakers working in two shifts added 6,000 more to the kitty. And, thanks to the cleverness of Lionel's design and his intransigent oversight, the loaves were of exactly the same quality as the original item.

No two Poilâne loaves are alike

Poilâne, an excruciating purist, in effect multiplied himself 24 times over, rather than climb into bed with industry. Each unit of the *manufacture* is manned by a master baker who makes his loaves from start to finish. They are Poilâne loaves, to be sure, and they strictly follow the boss' standard operating procedure, but each one still bears an individual touch: Lionel can tell the difference between Alain's bread, Michel's and Fernand's, even if the casual customer finds them identical. The touch of an artisan's hand, he is convinced, will always show through in his *manufacture*. To ensure that his crew does not lose sight of the "manu" part, Poilâne equips each unit with tools and receptacles that, to a large extent, are straight out of the 18th century. Next

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Poilâne inspects warm sourdough rising in wicker baskets lined with linen. Ovens keep bakery temperature at around 90 degrees F.

to each kneading-trough, for example, hangs a bucket for water, instead of the automatic faucet common to most bakeries today.

"I intentionally installed a medieval system," he explains as we amble from oven to oven. "In bakery school, students learn to push a button that delivers 60 liters of water at 40 degrees Celsius. I tried that, but then I realized that the push-button just stops them from thinking about what they're doing—it disengages man from his work. With the buckets, the baker has to think about the quality and quantity of each batch of dough. Sixty liters at 40 degrees isn't necessarily right, you see? In baking, everything is a question of variables—the temperature that day, the humidity, the quality of the flour, and the like. There are no absolute rules. A good baker has to be intuitive and adjust. That's why I like to call my buckets a form of retroactive progress."

From the wicker baskets where lumps of warm dough lie in seductive repose, rising as yeast swells their volume, to the long-handled wooden spatulas on overhead racks, to the brick and wrought iron of the ovens and the raging fires within them, everything about the *manufacture* reflects Lionel's Luddite loathing for pointless automation and modern trappings. His only major concession to mechanization is the electric-powered kneading machine that equips each baking unit. Even for a Luddite at heart, it is too much to ask his artisans to knead 600-pound batches of dough by hand. He compensates for this breach of purity by pointing out that both the wood for the ovens and the flour for the dough come down to the units by gravity feed.

"An excellent device, gravity," he says brightly. "Up to now I've never known it to break down." He turns his eyes from the woodpile and briefly contemplates the cast-iron oven door with "Poilâne" stamped on its face. It reminds him of something irksome. "Do you know what the manufacturers of modern bakery equipment are putting on the front of their ovens now?" he asks urgently, tapping the warm brick. "A radio—imagine! To distract the man who's probably going to cook premixed or frozen dough in them!"

You will find no radios, no extractors, no thermostats, no fans, blowers or other gadgetry attached to the ovens in the Manufacture Poilâne. And the warm, mellow air, tasting of warm bread, will be sullied with no rock music, no deejays announcing the Top Ten. The discreet hum of the kneading machines and the crackling of oak fires was the only Muzak accompanying our circular stroll around the periphery of Lionel's giant Camembert—a path and an atmosphere irresistibly inviting comparison to a monastery's ambulatory. Picture windows offered an uninterrupted view over parklike expanses of grass, where ferns, shrubbery and apple trees thrived among groves of young oak, beech and acacia. Like many of the 19th century's idealistic industrialist visionaries, Lionel had set out to construct a place of labor and had ended up with a kind of worker's paradise, paternalism and all.

"I have guys who come here an hour or so before their shifts begin, just to enjoy nature," he says with undisguised pride. "I'm extremely sensitive to esthetics. From the start I insisted on having this harmony between technique and nature. This is a modern installation, but it is essentially handwork that we do here. The hand is the finest tool of all. It is infinitely more sophisticated than any robot. If there is any 'secret' to Poilâne bread, it is in the magic of the hand. You know, I even give a course here on the hand."

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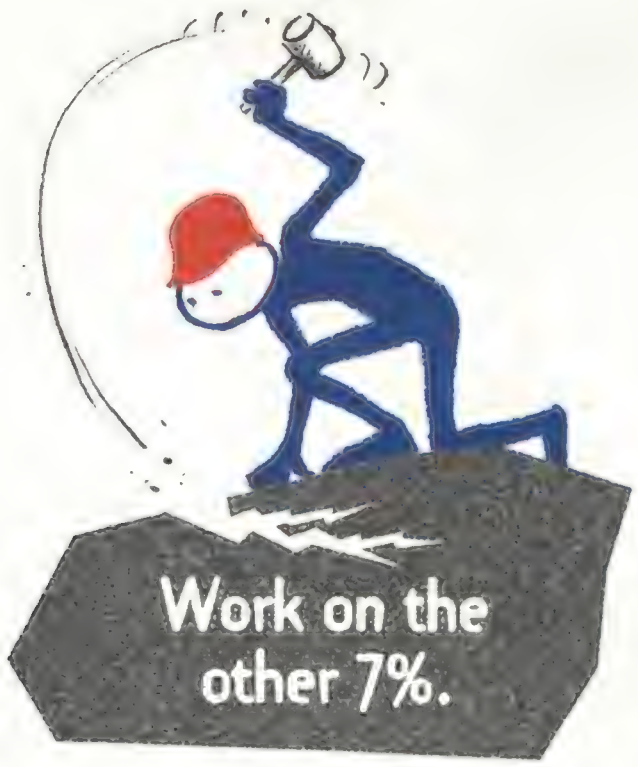

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So, Lionel the benevolent paternalist, Lionel the esthete, is also Lionel the pedagogue, the man who instituted a CD-ROM Poilâne School for his employees' enlightenment. His ten-minute computer lessons cover "shop" subjects such as hygiene, temperature, nutrition and biology, but they also range out to history and what he calls "ethnobotany," or the study of man's relationship to the grains that sustain him.

As if this were not enough, he is Lionel the moralist, as well, passionately determined to instill in his enterprise a "culture of virtue" by which his workers might reach the noble status of his ideal: "the honest man of the 18th century."

If all this sounds rather anachronistic, it's because it is. Lionel is happy to use computers for his accounting, the phone and fax for orders, and the internal combustion engine for delivering Lauren Bacall her loaf. But where the actual creation of his bread is concerned, he thanks the 20th century for little more than the electric kneading machine and indirect lighting.

"But this approach is not for any silly reasons of folklore," Lionel insists. "In reality, what I am using is the most sophisticated material of all, the most extraordinarily complex and up-to-date machine that there is: man. As a general rule, I've found that the more modern and automated a *boulangerie* is, the less good is the baker himself."

Back on the rue du Cherche-Midi and comfortably ensconced beneath a bread-dough chandelier in the shop's back room, Lionel the self-taught scholar who quit school at 14, discourses at length and with ease, as is his wont, going from bread to history, economics, religion and philosophy, hardly pausing when one of his white-smocked bakery vestals delivers us coffee, tea and a voluptuous mountain of still-warm croissants and *petits pains au chocolat.* Filling every inch of wall space around him is the extraordinary collection of paintings: obsessively repeated sourdough loaves in every conceivable pose, the homage of two generations of painters beholden first to Papa and then to Lionel himself.

Why Dali's pictures look crumby

He speaks with fondness of the conductor's baton he made of bread for Danny Kaye, and of the picture frames for Salvador Dali. He cites from memory figures on bread consumption throughout history—the French worker, who spent 50 percent to 70 percent of his pay on bread in the 16th and 17th centuries, and 25 percent in the 19th, spends only about 1 percent on it today—and points out, as many have before him, that the French Revolution had more to do with the shortage of bread than with the shortage of liberty. He clues me in on the historical footnote that Rodin was a cheapo (he had never paid for the hay and grain that Lionel's farming ancestors delivered to him), and merely rolls his eyes at the mention of American factory bread, as if the stuff hardly even merits the expense of breath to speak words. But where *real* bread is concerned, his words are many, fluent and eloquent.

"Bread has always accompanied every step of civilization," he explains, his blue-green eyes sparkling brightly as he grasps my arm to emphasize the importance of what he is saying. "The simple act of crushing wheat—the first primitive milling—was a major step for mankind. Man became sedentary because of the desire to grow wheat and make bread. Fermentation of dough was the start of biotechnology. The first sewing was probably to put skins together as primitive silos. The first gears, teethed wheels, were probably for flour mills—and the first clutch mechanisms, too, and the first governors and the first camshafts. The art of mechanics came from the need for bread. It was the quest for bread that engendered industry."

From technology and industry we suddenly veer into *croustons,* his invention for the wedding of bread to the creative traditions of French gastronomy. *Croustons* are slices of hot toasted Poilâne bread spread with various delicacies that only a Frenchman, it seems, could conceive of. Their enumeration quickly begins to resemble

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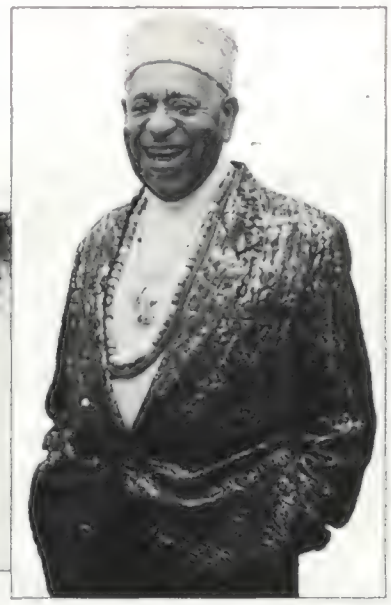

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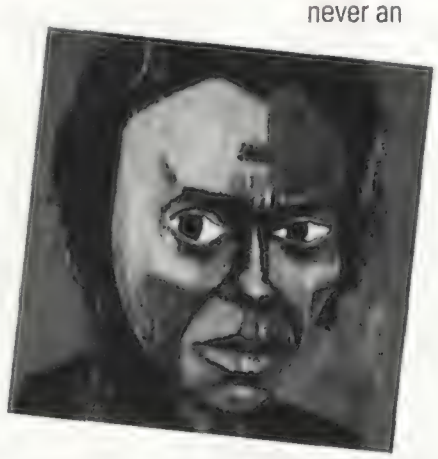

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Bubba's "shrimp" litany in the film *Forrest Gump*: *croustons* with celery and blue cheese, *croustons* with mashed peas and mint, *croustons* with shallots and red wine, *croustons* with rose petals . . .

Well, that's Lionel for you, or at least one of the Lionels, the gourmet this time. Me, I'm kind of partial to Poilâne bread with ham, cheese and mayo, or around a BLT, and I wouldn't send it away if it appeared dressed in PB & J, either.

By all evidence, I'm not the only one marked by such an omnivorous form of Poilânatry, though, because after we have gone through the *crouston* inventory, Lionel hits me with his punch line, a statistic that is as pleasing as it is surprising: those charming sourdough loaves of his represent 2.5 percent of current bread consumption in Paris! That's a whole lot of bread in French tummies and, I might add, a rather respectable amount in Lionel's wallet, too.

After I have devoured all the croissants I can possibly contain, Lionel offers further evidence of the benefits of bread by guiding me on a tour through the six stories of the Cherche-Midi building in whose rented basement he had labored and in whose ground-floor back room he had eaten cabbage soup as a lad. Today the entire building is his property, and when I visit it, a swarm of workmen are fixing it up brand-new, from sub-basement to rooftop. This will be the archives room, he says, this, a reception area for visitors, this, his wife's office and this—way up on top, of course—his office. Other rooms on other floors, one suspects, will make fine play areas for his young daughters, Athena and Apollonia, or perhaps an inner-sanctum library where Lionel the curious can stock his books and plunge even more deeply into history, art, science, religion, astronomy or any of the myriad other subjects that fascinate him. They're all related to bread, after all.

"A wheat seed," he reminds me, "transmits an unbelievable amount of information when it is planted. Well, that's what I'm trying to do with my companions at the *manufacture*. And who knows? Maybe I can go even beyond that and help people everywhere understand and respect bread—real bread."

Poilâne holds slices of his bread up to the light to examine its alveolate structure, caused by fermentation. Because both bread and beer are made from fermented grains, he likes to refer to his bread as "solid beer."

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THE LATEST WORD ON TOURS, EXPEDITIONS AND LEARNING ADVENTURES

By Steve Kemper

What's good for the goose may not be good for you

Honk if you've had it up to here with geese on the golf course, in your yard, all over parks and beaches. You are not the only one

Saul and Robin Asken were thrilled when Canada geese encamped every spring on an island in their pond. "We thought, what a miracle of nature," says Robin. "We videotaped them. We didn't even mind all the noise they made because they were so beautiful." Then one morning the geese would be gone, in the gypsy way of migratory waterfowl.

But that was before some neighbors began feeding the birds. Lured by the prospect of easy living, a dozen of the geese decided to cease their wanderings and retire permanently to the pond in bucolic Weston, Connecticut. "It turned into a miserable experience," says Robin, who manages her husband's cosmetic-surgery practice and often works at home. "You had to scrape your shoes when you got to the door. It was such a hot summer, and the smell outside was *so* bad. And they were extremely aggressive. We felt like prisoners in our house. They chased me and my children up and down the driveway. Even the dog was frightened. He chased the geese, but then the geese chased him."

Last spring she decided to fight back. "I put my heart and soul into it. I felt like a raging maniac, because every time I saw the geese I would run outside and scream and chase them. I tried everything. There's a man in a store in Westport who laughed at me because I

Penned geese await relocation during summer roundup in Virginia. Because they're molting, the birds can't fly.

Photographs by Cameron Davidson

Out for a stroll, goose family trespasses on a putting green in Alexandria, Virginia. Short grass and plenty of it, together with an ample water supply, makes golf courses ideal and increasingly popular goose habitat.

would come in to buy balloons to line my driveway and other things to scare the geese. He got this wind-activated penguin and called me and said I should try it. It worked for a while. Everything worked for three or four days, and then you'd look out and see them sitting right next to whatever you were using to scare them. We spent a lot of money on balloons and plastic ornaments. My yard really looked ridiculous."

The Askens have plenty of exasperated company all over the country—farmers, wildlife officers, town officials, airport administrators, golfers. They grumble about property damage, threats to human health and safety, and just plain aggravation. The number of "nuisance goose" complaints jumps every year. And yet most people, starved for contact with wildlife and sentimental about it, are delighted to see these handsome birds thrive amid urbanization. They take their children to the park to feed the geese, unaware that they are contributing to the problem.

Not all that long ago, people thought of Canada geese as symbols of wildness and long-distance flight, high-honking heralds carrying news of the seasons along the flyways. But today there is a burgeoning population of sedentary geese that, as one wildlife official puts it, "couldn't find Canada on the best day of their lives." Nor do they want to. These resident pests find landscaped suburban lawns much more pleasant than subarctic tundra. Tastier, too.

We are reaping the consequences of success. The renaissance of *Branta canadensis* is one of wildlife management's great triumphs. Due to more favorable weather conditions, changing agricultural practices and restrictions on hunting, Canada goose populations doubled between 1955 and 1974, and kept on rising. In 1948 there were 200,000 geese in the Atlantic flyway; by 1981 they numbered 955,000.

Of the 11 races of Canada geese, none has rebounded as spectacularly as *Branta canadensis maxima.* Considered extinct in the mid-l950s, this large (12 pounds, on average) creature now makes up most of the resident goose colonies around the country. Because of hunting pressure and bad weather up north, the overall number of Canada geese has been declining in the Atlantic flyway over the past ten years; it was down to 600,000 last year. The population of year-round residents, however, has exploded. Many states on the Eastern Seaboard have adopted special hunting seasons aimed specifically at these resident flocks, but no one really expects this to have much effect. The birds usually live near people, and towns are reluctant to let hunters blast away in parks or on corporate campuses.

From the goose's perspective, the reasons for sticking

Steve Kemper lives in Connecticut, where he sees plenty of geese. He wrote about the entrepreneur and inventor Dean Kamen in the November 1994 issue.

around are obvious. First, there's its temperament. Biologist Harold C. Hanson, who rediscovered the "extinct" race *B.c. maxima* in 1965, noted that the "placid disposition of the giant Canada goose sets it apart from all others."

The second reason is that we have created more and more attractive habitat. If a Canada goose were to design paradise, there would be lots of short, tender grass for grazing, a pond of fresh water for drinking and security, and no predators. It would look almost exactly like a park, golf course, waterfront estate, cemetery or manicured corporate complex (sometimes referred to by wildlife officers as "corporate goose farms").

Perhaps because their situation is relatively plush and safe, giant geese among us tend to live longer than their migratory cousins. They also have more goslings, which are far more likely to survive than those hatched amid predators on an inhospitable piece of tundra and then required to fly 1,500 miles through inclement weather and hunters' guns. Result: exponential leaps in the population of resident geese.

Wildlife biologists are just beginning to confirm the numbers. New Jersey now believes that 50,000 geese are parked in the state. (At a recent workshop on geese, held by the Wayne, New Jersey, Department of Parks and Recreation, a man suggested killing two birds with one stone by feeding resident Canada geese to the homeless.) Seattle has counted a year-round population of 5,000 on Lake Washington. Biologists were amazed to discover that the giant Canadas in the Mississippi flyway number about one million—three or four times the previous estimates, and as many as all the other races of Canada geese in the flyway combined.

When does a thing of beauty cease to be a joy and become a nuisance? When it chews your grass down to the dirt. When it besmears beaches and picnic areas, sometimes forcing them to close. When it eats your budding crop of rye and befouls your farm pond. When you can't use the swimming pool because the geese already have. When your children can't play outside without getting stained green or nipped by a hissing mother goose. Goose lovers tend to dismiss such complaints and goose-free people tend to chuckle at them. Even the birds' victims, most of them, admit the humorous side of their travails. But their laughter is fleeting. They want relief.

In the Seattle area, 96 public parks and golf courses decided recently to reclaim their land. "People were fed up," said Mike Pitzler, an animal-damage control officer with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) who was stationed in the area at the time. "We just had a woman call who had chased two geese right out of her house after they'd chased her in from the porch."

Under Pitzler's guidance, the group worked its way through the traditional arsenal of antigoose weapons. They tried frightening the birds with explosive shells and noisemakers. They tethered dogs on lines along the

A gander flies at photographer who approached his nest. Such behavior is defensive, but geese can inflict injury.

Carefree flock grazes on lush lawn at one of the many corporate headquarters in Hartford, Connecticut.

On a summer day, geese who should be in their northern breeding grounds waddle up a Virginia road instead.

beaches. They put up flags and low fences and helium balloons and shiny Mylar tape on poles. They even deployed small, remote-controlled boats and airplanes to chase the birds. Nothing worked for long. (Other popular and futile nostrums include dried blood, mothballs, salt, stuffed owls, stuffed foxes, plastic swans, live swans, mechanical clappers, ultra-high-frequency sounds, propane cannon, electric fences, slingshots, monofilament line and brooms.) Frustrated, the Seattle group decided to try goose relocation.

During the next two years, 3,500 geese migrated involuntarily from the area, most of them in an 18-foot trailer bound for waterfowl habitats built by the Army Corps of Engineers along the Lower Snake River in Washington and Idaho. The Corps expected to need a steady supply of relocated geese for replacements as the earlier arrivals either strayed from the reserve or were shot by hunters. But the geese just sat there, and soon the place was jammed.

Last year, with a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over migratory waterfowl, Pitzler's group started to spray the eggs around Lake Washington with a mineral oil solution that suffocates the embryos. Pitzler estimates that the combination of relocation and egg spraying has cut the resident population to about 3,000. "But it won't take long for those birds to repopulate the area," he says. "If we don't have a continual waterfowl management program, it's going to get out of control again."

On the other side of the country, Mitchell Posin worries that the geese living on Martha's Vineyard are going to eat his spring clover again. He prefers to move his 150 sheep to new pasturage every two days so the clover's root system stays charged and healthy. "But the geese just blow it," he says. "They eat it right down to nothing." It annoys him that he has to use extra fuel and fertilizer, and that he has to buy concentrated sheep feed instead of relying entirely on his own forage.

Laura E. Henze, the USDA's director for animal-damage control in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, asks him what kinds of deterrents he has tried. Posin ticks off many of the usual weapons, failures all. He doesn't hunt but intends to start because of the geese, and has requested a special permit to kill some of the birds out of season. "For me to farm," he says, "I have to get out there and get on 'em."

Posin hasn't yet tried to scare away the geese with pyrotechnic "shell-crackers," so he, Henze and William L. Searle, a Massachusetts environmental police sergeant, walk out into his fields with a shotgun. Posin points out places where geese have browsed clover to the nub. Several geese grazing nearby look up in mild curiosity. Posin points the shotgun and fires. A shell-cracker explodes over the birds, and they skim down to the freshwater pond at the bottom of the field. Posin shoots another round. The birds flutter their wings briefly, then settle right back. Posin fires again. The geese don't even flinch. Posin raises an eyebrow. "Believe me," he says, "you gotta kill 'em."

If Posin shoots some of the 300 or so geese that regularly dine on his clover, that flock will abandon the area, but a new batch of the Vineyard's 4,000 resident geese surely will move in. "More people are encroaching on wildlife, and vice versa," notes Henze. "Attitudes are changing, too. We're turning into a society that's more preservationist than conservationist, but basically these geese have turned into livestock. They are not wild animals anymore."

That was Howard Steinberg's argument two years ago when he persuaded the town council of Morristown, New Jersey, to petition the Interior Department—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—to remove resident Canada geese from the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act so he could get rid of them. "They're not

Goose about to be banded (right) complains, but to no avail. Birds captured and banded in the Alexandria area, near Washington, D.C., are penned (below) and relocated to central Virginia.

Canada geese anymore, they're tri-state geese," says Steinberg, Morristown's health officer and director of human services. "We have a situation where a treaty ratified in 1918 protects Canada geese because they were almost hunted into extinction. But in 1994 are they becoming extinct? Or are they a nuisance?"

He worries about the threat to public health. "The geese most definitely have contaminated lakes, beaches and water supplies," Steinberg says. Groton, Connecticut, recently spent more than $250,000 to reseed and reloam the embankments of its reservoirs after a flock of 300 geese reduced the grass to dirt, which led to erosion and pollution. Geese are hazards at airports, too, where they congregate to munch the acres of short grass. They have forced planes to land with goose-ruined engines and goose-damaged wings.

The USDA's Henze gets more complaints about Canada geese than about any other animal. The most goose-prone area on her beat is Fairfield County, in southeastern Connecticut, and the goosiest spot in that county is the wealthy town of Greenwich. The place teems with ponds, parks, country clubs and sweeping lawns. "I've been dealing with geese for more than 15 years, and it gets worse every year," says Frank Keegan, the town's director of parks and recreation. "Each one of those buggers is just a lawn-mowing-and-fertilizing machine—in one end and out the other. We've tried everything, but there's no real solution. They're resilient, and they get used to anything. So we've concentrated on two areas, Byram Shore Beach and the golf course, and given the rest to the geese."

Superintendent Glenn Dochtermann scares geese with blanks at Sherwood Island State Park in Connecticut.

The town has conceded its biggest beach, Greenwich Point, to the birds. That infuriates Harry Catanzaro, who feels that Greenwich's hefty taxes entitle him and his family to a clean space to unroll a beach towel. Last year he and other disgusted citizens circulated a petition at the beach calling for the town to do something. "I want my kids to be able to walk barefoot on the beach again," he says. "I don't believe in shooting everything, but there has to be a balance."

Combatants in the goose wars are upset that the birds won't be reasonable. They don't know their place. They refuse to accept people as a higher authority. They don't pay taxes or country club dues but act like those who do are the intruders.

Every summer Sunday, for instance, a few miles up the coast from Greenwich, nearly 20,000 humans pile into Sherwood Island State Park and mingle with hundreds of geese. There is often a traffic jam at the park's entrance, caused by a slow parade of crossing geese or by a fender bender caused by someone slamming on the brakes to avoid the parade. Over on the volleyball and baseball fields, someone is probably slipping into an involuntary goose glissade, which occasionally ends in a sprained ankle or separated shoulder. In the picnic areas people flick tables clean, while on the beaches sunbathers look for an unsoiled patch of sand.

When the park's supervisor, Glenn A. Dochtermann, moved there five years ago, geese were in the habit of sitting, and so forth, on the front steps of his house. He has pushed them out about 40 yards and is working hard on the rest of the park—letting grass grow tall in back areas (tall grass makes geese nervous because it provides cover for predators), filling in dozens of parking-lot potholes that geese use as watering holes and squawking at them through the PA system in his truck.

Whoopee-ti-yi-yo, get along little dogies

One afternoon in early July, a crew from Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection fans out over several acres in Sherwood Island and slowly herds about 150 grazing geese off of a baseball field, away from a dripping water pipe, between some picnic tables and toward the mouth of a wide, V-shaped chute that ends in a mesh corral. The birds can't fly away because they are molting and have lost their flight feathers.

The goose-punchers' mission is to make sure all of the adult birds are outfitted with white neck collars prominently emblazoned with large, black identification numbers. Before a goose can be properly ID'd, its sex must be determined, which involves folding its neck under its wing, flipping the bird over and prying into its tail feathers—a process accompanied by a lot of nipping and

After eating bread spiked with a drug, tranquilized geese congregate around a pond in western Virginia. They will be captured and taken east to state's coast.

squirting by the birds and an equal amount of yelping and swearing by the handlers. Later in the year, spotters throughout the state will record neck-collar numbers as part of a six-year study of the movements and survival rates of both resident and migrant Canada geese in the Atlantic flyway.

Golf courses make perfect goose habitat. Consequently there are more birds than birdies at many clubs, and many foul fairways. Disgusted golfers have been known to swing at geese with their mashies. Ten years ago, a golfer in Maryland was arrested for clubbing one to death. Along with the usual complaints about droppings, wildlife officers occasionally hear about nesting geese that attack golfers or won't let them near a green. Some courses have gotten permits to shoot the birds; a country club in Maryland held a goose hunt, followed by a goose feast.

Pat Lucas took over as superintendent of the Innis Arden Golf Club in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, in the late 1970s. "There were hundreds of geese here then," he says, bouncing along a fairway in a cart. "Now we don't have a problem." But as he crests a hill, he sees a flock of Canada geese grazing at the edge of a serpentine pond. "They must not know Innis Arden," says Lucas calmly.

His strategy for goosing the geese is two-pronged. First weapon: large plastic swans accompanied by small plastic cygnets. "We have three fake swan families on our pond," he explains. "If geese fly over and see the swans, nine times out of ten they go somewhere else because they know that swans with cygnets are vicious. But you can't just put out swans and live happily ever after. If the geese do land, and you don't do anything, pretty soon the bravest one will go in the water, and then more of them. Pretty soon they're swimming around the swans, and the jig is up."

Which brings Lucas to his second prong. "We've named it the hunter-ambush approach. If they land on the grass, you have to make them feel hunted. I'll have a guy with a shotgun creep up on them from the woods for 10 or 15 minutes early in the morning or late in the evening. The gander will give out a signal: 'Something's wrong!' They stop eating. All their heads point in one direction, toward the stalker. They start to flap their wings a little. That means they're primed to go. Then the guy comes out of the woods blasting blanks. They take off and won't come back because they get the message."

Sometimes, though, Lucas runs into geese that won't leave, the ones he calls "rogue geese—hard cases." To give these toughs the willies, the ambusher carries a boombox, and just before he jumps out shooting, he cranks up a tape of Canada goose distress calls. "You're speaking in their own language," he says. "It gets rid of them." Golf course superintendents from all over the country call Lucas for advice. He scoffs at the usual array of antigoose techniques. "The key is, you've got to stop thinking like a human and start thinking like a goose."

The goose-brained approach also has paid off for Dow Jones and Company Inc. Three years ago the corporation's headquarters, on 175 acres in South Brunswick, New Jersey, was overrun with hundreds of geese. Today the pond is goose-free, and the expensive brogues alighting from the corporate helicopter no longer skid in foreign matter. The reason: Bert and Bessie, the company's tireless Border collies. The dogs herd the geese into the pond and then keep circling it. The geese get frustrated because they can't waddle out and eat the grass, so they leave. Geese periodically test Bert and Bessie, which keeps the dogs alert and happy. The company is getting inquiries about them from other corporations and from golf courses.

What to do about nuisance geese?

A Canadian named Bill Lishman is trying to teach geese to migrate. For the past two autumns, he has used an ultralight aircraft to lead small flocks from Canada to Virginia. The first "class" made it back to Canada on its own. Science is on the case as well. Biologists at the USDA's Denver Wildlife Research Center are looking for ways to nauseate geese. Two compounds, tested on corporate lawns and golf courses throughout the country, show great promise. The first is methyl anthranilate, which occurs naturally in grapes and citrus fruits, and is enjoyed by humans as an additive in grape juice, grape soda and bubble gum. Geese detest it.

"We've encapsulated the material so it's not released until the geese begin feeding," says John Cummings, the wildlife biologist in charge of the project. "It's the same as scratch-and-sniff technology. As geese feed, they pop these capsules and get a mouthful, and they shake their heads and go someplace else." The other compound has the code name DRC-156. "It's a taste compound, and it also irritates the stomach, like if you were to eat a bad taco," explains Cummings. "The bird remembers that, and when he tastes it again, he avoids it." Though both compounds are food products, they must go through the laborious federal approval process for pesticides, since they will be used to fight pests.

Cummings' research center sits on 600 acres with lots of short grass. "It's kind of ironic," he says, "but we have our own goose problem here." The birds nest around planters and entryways, and—especially during breeding season—harass employees trying to get into the buildings. "We have a pair nesting in our quad right now," says Cummings. "The male will chase people and give defense postures to passing cars."

In Ohio, another USDA research biologist, Richard Dolbeer, is excited about alpha-chloralose, a compound once used as an anesthetic for humans because of its narcotic effect. Dolbeer has tested it all over the country and used it two years ago to remove 25 geese that were causing a hazard at Florida's Daytona International Airport. The compound looks like powdered sugar. Dolbeer mixes it with vegetable oil, then injects it into bread. He slips this Mickey to the geese and waits. "About half an hour later," he says, "a goose looks like somebody who's had too much to drink. It starts wobbling around, and then sits down and passes out." The stupefied geese can easily be collected and put into pens for relocation. They recover within 12 hours.

Such talk doesn't please Leslie Gerstenfield-Press, a biologist in the research and investigations department of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), in Rockville, Maryland. She calls trapping and relocation inhumane and traumatic for the birds, who may get separated from their families and be transported in uncomfortably crowded cages. PETA recently filed a large-scale lawsuit in Minnesota to prohibit the trapping and moving of geese. The group's opinion of hunting and euthanasia is, of course, far worse.

"We prefer habitat modification," says Gerstenfield-Press. "It's somewhat inconvenient but worth it in the long term. It's more ethical. Excuse me if I don't think it's warranted to trap and remove geese because they're hindering play on a golf course. I don't consider the play is all that important."

What does she recommend doing when geese take over public places, such as a park or beach? "When you say geese are 'taking over a park,' I would never use those words. I don't view Canada geese at a park as a problem. We took that place and changed it from a meadow and put in a park and picnic benches, so we have stolen their home, and they have a right to be there."

If Canada geese have proven themselves masters at adapting to the changes we've made in their habitat, it's less clear whether we can adapt to the changes they are making in ours. Shortly after Robin and Saul Asken moved into their house in Connecticut, they hired a biologist to relocate 15 raccoons, at $150 per raccoon. They regularly see herds of 10 to 15 deer. And then there are the geese. "I chose to live here," says Robin Asken. "I have this beautiful area, and living here is what I want. But it comes with problems—ticks on the deer that carry Lyme disease, rabies in the raccoons, and now we have this goose problem." She pauses. "You learn to deal with these things." Recently the Askens spent $3,000 on a 600-foot fence between their yard and the pond; now they have another fence bordering the pond. "Sometimes I wonder," Robin jokes, "if we'd feel safer living in Manhattan."

Downy carpet, close-cropped grass, show how intensively geese use one stretch of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

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By James J. Kilpatrick

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Grande dame of an 18th-century comedy, she has been an aspiration to all who read—and write—the boners, gaffes and mutilations perpetrated upon the English language

"Mrs. Malaprop's giddy ghost sits on a filing cabinet in my office."

Mrs. Malaprop sails onto the stage in Act One, her spinnaker flying madly. At once she assails her niece, the lissome Lydia Languish, who has fallen for an apparently impecunious sailor. Lydia must promise to forget this fellow, Mrs. M. commands: ". . . illiterate him, I say, from your memory." Moreover, she warns, "Don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it!" As *The Rivals* romps along, the dear dowager remarks that few gentlemen "know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman!" Lydia's affair has given Mrs. Malaprop the "hydrostatics." She is astonished at the girl's "insurance." Indeed, her niece is "as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile."

"Customers 'got a letter warning of lead-contaminated water in your mail.'"

Richard Sheridan's comedy is not widely staged today, but Mrs. Malaprop lives on. Her giddy ghost sits on a filing cabinet in my office, where she presides over a thousand exhibits of howlers, boners, gaffes, and myriad felonies and misdemeanors committed upon the English language. The file folders run from "Allusions" to "Wrong Words," but none is fatter than the one marked "M" for Malaprop.

Here is the sort of thing her blessed shade inspires. In its newsletter, a luxury cruise line ran a fancy promotion for a cruise through the Panama Canal. The big attraction? Passengers could stand by the rail and watch their ship "lifted by a series of ingenuous locks." Now, it may be said that ingenious locks turned into ingenuous locks only by typographical error, but the explanation is unpersuasive. At the level of the five-star cruise line, ten copy editors pore over every word. Some benignly evil force was at work.

Strange things happen. In 1994 *Retiree News* reported the glum possibility that the naval hospital in Charleston, South Carolina, might be closed. This was "according to rumors emulating from the Pentagon." The AAA *Motorist* carried a feature on skiing: "The sheer volume of skiable terrain in the Northwest makes it a venerable skiers' paradise." In a story about the censorship of speakers, the Associated Press observed that in 1972 Robert E. Lee couldn't have qualified to speak at the University of North Carolina because "Lee abdicated the overthrow of the U.S. Government."

How do these things happen? It is not because the writers were reaching out for a few five-dollar words. There's nothing highfalutin about "ingenious," "emanating," "veritable" and "advocated." No, I am prepared to argue that the spirit of Mrs. Malaprop is to blame—she who confessed that "my affluence over my niece is very small."

The old girl is everywhere. Remember the case of Tonya Harding? When she was about to be banned from amateur competition, the U.S. Figure Skating Association looked at evidence of her misconduct, which included signed

statements, forensic analysis, news clippings, an anonymous letter "and heresy." The chances are that much that is termed heresy depends on hearsay, but it was a bum rap for the defendant.

Thinking of things legal: five of Michael Jackson's former bodyguards sued the pop star for firing them without due process of law, or some such allegation, and Jackson's lawyers filed a response citing "his constitutional protection against self-discrimination." Now there's a constitutional right worth cherishing.

Carolina Gardener carried a friendly item on chipmunks. The cunning little animals are squeaky-clean, "able to reach every part of their body with their absolutions." Absolutely.

It is uncanny the way some of these solipsisms turn out. In Tyler, Texas, a trustee was ordered to put the contents of an elegant store up for auction. The store had gone into bankruptcy "due to a disillusionment of partnership." Obviously the trustee wanted to refer to the dissolution of the partnership, but something happened on the way to the public notice. Mrs. M., you will recall, learned a great deal about disillusion. Was a psychic phenomenon at work? Does dissolution follow disillusion?

I began writing my weekly column on the use and abuse of the English language in 1981. (If you listen closely, you will hear Mrs. M. snickering at the preceding sentence, for of course I did not mean to say that I was concerned with use and abuse only in 1981; I meant to say that I began the column in 1981, but there was no convenient place to park "in 1981" without creating a traffic jam of prepositional phrases. The innocent English paragraph is a cotton-picking minefield.) Anyhow, readers responded with bales of mail. It soon became apparent that many Americans care deeply about points of usage. Readers sent in Horrid Examples by the thousands. They sent Pet Peeves. All this stuff somehow had to be filed.

Mangled syntax provided a major category. In Marshville, North Carolina, water customers were reminded: "You probably got a letter warning you about the dangers of lead-contaminated water in your mail." In a society that grows ever more perilous, not even the hamlet of Marshville (pop. 2,011) provides a haven against the risk of contaminated water in one's mail.

Prepositional phrases are perverse little varmints. They burrow into a sentence like so many prairie dogs. "Improve Your Treatment of Personality Disorders in San Antonio" was how the conference invitation read. A neurologist in Georgia sent me the brochure with a mild note of puzzlement. He wasn't interested in treating personality disorders in San Antonio. He wanted to treat disorders in Augusta. It figures.

James Dickey, poet and professor, observed his 70th birthday in 1993 as guest of honor at "a surprise luncheon with a birthday cake thrown by several close friends in the English Department." The news account seems somehow incomplete. One wishes to inquire, at whom was this cake thrown? What were the consequences?

A dog-control officer in Cattaraugus County, New York, wrote the *Buffalo News* to say that her county does not want abandoned dogs. Recently she had picked up a cocker spaniel, a very adoptable dog, that had run afoul of the law. "It was hungry and made the mistake of nipping a 2-year-old child who was trying to force feed the doggy in his ear." The dog was put down; the sentence should have gone with it.

After a while, the file labeled "Mangles" had to be subdivided. One offshoot was a file on "Blinkers," composed of citations that make a reader blink: "Molenda's last known address was not known." There was something to think about. "The tax scheme favors corporations that operate totally or more in North Carolina." How can a corporation have operations that are more than totally? Beats me.

In Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a fast-food franchise opened a second restaurant: "The chain is known for its skimpily clad waitresses and chicken wings." I ask you, gentle reader: When was the last time you saw a skimpily clad chicken wing? You never know about these things. A year ago a Florida newspaper reported the citation of a roadside saleswoman for "selling hot dogs clad only in a T-back" swimsuit.

Blinkers crop up in the most unexpected places. The *Washington Post*, one of the best-edited newspapers in the land, carried a story in August 1994 on the firing of Special Counsel Robert Fiske. Said the *Post*: "The move stunned members of Congress who were wrapping up Whitewater hearings as well as nearly everyone connected with the

"James Dickey, poet and professor, was guest of honor at 'a luncheon with a birthday cake thrown by close friends in the English Department.'"

Illustrations by Keith Bendis

"In Myrtle Beach, a fast-food chain 'is known for its skimpily clad waitresses and chicken wings.'"

investigation." Whole lot of folks to wrap up. The same phenomenon appeared in Columbus, Ohio, at a ragtag rally of the Ku Klux Klan outside the Statehouse: "Several people perched in trees or stood on the 'Mother of Presidents' statue, which had been wrapped in a protective layer of plastic to get a better view."

Sometimes a blinkered sentence expresses self-evident truth, though the truth may not be clear to see. This was the case with a report in Cincinnati on an overcapacity of hospital beds. The piece looked at health plans in California as a basis for comparison to the local situation. One thing was certain: "Members of California HMOs spend far less time in the hospital than in Cincinnati." It would have been interesting to learn if members of California HMOs spend *any* time in Cincinnati. Such are the great Unanswered Questions that perplex humankind.

Confusions arise from the simplest constructions: "Two new booklets are available for South Carolinians who are survivors of head injuries and their families." The longer I ponder that innocent and inoffensive sentence, the more I wonder what to do with it.

One month my best Blinker came from Denver. Channel 4 offered a thought for the day from its specialist in criminal justice: "Don't go into darkened parking lots unless they are well-lighted." You could live a thousand years and not hear better advice.

Another subclassification of the Mangle is the Baffler. Blinkers leave us, well, blinking; Bafflers leave us mystified. I have been unable to rid my mind of one Baffler that arrived in April 1994. The story described the grounds of the Recordings for the Blind studio in Oak Ridge, Tennessee: "It is an idyllic scene, similar maybe to idealized memories of . . . oak trees, where squirrels scamper, and Bradford pear trees shaped like champagne glasses decorate a brook that ruminates through green grass, walking trails and tennis courts." The brook does what? It *ruminates*? It ruminates through grass, trails and tennis courts? How does it do that? When I last talked with "ruminate," sometime in 1983, the verb had to do with cud-chewing, which is what ruminant animals do when they have a weekday afternoon to kill. By metaphorical extension, "to ruminate" means "to ponder," or to think long thoughts, to engage in "omphaloskepsis," a $4.99 word I have been waiting for two years to slip into a piece of copy.

What did the writer have in mind? Brooks babble, for one thing. There are books in brooks, agreed. But what about a brook that ruminates through a tennis court? Might make it hard to play doubles. Desperate questions beg for answers. How wide is this ruminating brook? How deep? Any fish in it? If this is an ill-mannered brook—a brook that would break up a tennis match!—if this intrusive brook is ruminating in the cud-chewing sense, what is the brook ruminating about? Come now! Out with it! Is the brook thinking about champagne? In a pear-shaped glass? This is one stuck-up brook. I will have none of it.

Something in the psyche of American writers, I regret to say, hungers pathetically to be French. For some of my brothers and sisters in the writing business, plain old understandable English is thought to be *déclassé*, meaning "not classy." This leads to the mistaken notion that nothing is prettier than a straw hat on a mule's head. A café in Virginia lists on its menu an irresistible entree: roast beef "with a cup of au jus on the side." Now that is a class-ay entray.

To the best of my knowledge, French writers do not hunger for the apt

"Homophone gremlins cause havoc as a navigator 'pours over' his maps."

For all intensive purposes, the author does his bear-faced ruminating in South Carolina's temperamental climbs.

"SMITHSONIAN portrayed President Bush as waiting 'with baited breath.'"

It is not only French that attracts us. We seem unable to resist *any* foreign furbelow. When a defendant represents himself, he appears "pro say." Now and then we take a crack at Yiddish, almost always with disastrous results. Lacking a diacritical umlaut, we commit grave offenses upon German spelling.

Mrs. Malaprop also insinuates herself into classified ads. It is astonishing how many teachers will "tudor" English. To do so, they may have to go to a tutor estate. Furniture dealers sell "French prevential" beds, "Chip 'n' Dale" tables, sofas by "Duncan Fife," and "naughty pine."

My theory is that advertising managers search for the worst spellers at every local high school and then hire the best of the worst to handle the animal ads. This compassionate policy gives us "Persion" kittens, "brude" mares, "Pikineese" puppies, a 10-lb "Chiwauwau" and a 6.5-ft "Bermese" python, house-friendly. Some of the animals are "spade." A distraught cat-lover, about to move to a no-pets apartment, once voiced a pathetic plea for someone to adopt her pet: "We can't bare to take her to the pound." It's hard to know quite what to make of this ad: "Free to good home. Husband, allergic to 1-yr. male cat, extremely lovable. Neutered & declawed."

Elsewhere in the classified columns one finds, under "Gardens," an ad for "Rows" of Sharon. Often one may pick up a "nice boy's bike" for $50, not much more than one would pay for a bad boy's bike.

As spellers, comic-strip artists are a sorry lot. Funky Winkerbean doesn't know "capitol" from "capital." Calvin wouldn't pay Hobbes a "nickle" for any thought Hobbes ever had. Mark Trail lets us know that shrikes are "very adapt" at catching mice. In *Outland*, a character prays at the "alter of exercise." In *Mary Worth*, a teenager's boombox gives "base" vibrations that can be heard a block away.

How did I get started on misspellings? This is a fat file. We have become a nation of terrible spellers. The ubiquitous Mrs. M. surely had a hand in writing a column of advice to public speakers: "Do not mumble—Annunciate your words clearly." At one small church the program for a Sunday in May carried this reminder: "Please remember, Feed the Hungry needs any non-parishable food." In the soap

American phrase; you will not find them inserting little aperçus of Yankee idiom into their formal texts. Yet we do this kind of thing all the time. An Oregon wildlife journal once carried a feature on buck deer. The animals often elude the hunter, but now and then a buck will make a mistake. The author concluded, "If you're in the right place at the right time the phopah may yield to you a wall hanger."

The rampant phopah takes many forms beyond the basic "faux pas." I still cherish the sportswriter who described a three-way baseball trade as a "ménage à trois." I used to collect misspellings of "hors d'oeuvres," but the pastime got to be depressing. I am deluged with citations of a French-fried cry of triumph: "Violà!" Then there was the society editor who described the bridesmaids' dresses as "café olé."

"An Ohio rescue squad had to find 'a wench to lift a tractor' off an injured farm worker."

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opera *All My Children* a year or so ago, "Tad has a heart-rendering reunion with his family." I'm all tears.

No gremlins in a newspaper's city room cause more havoc than homophones. This is because they so skillfully elude the computerized spellchecker. A homophone, for the record, is one of two or more words that sound more or less alike, are spelled differently and have different meanings. To say that homophones wreck havoc is to state the case, for a spellchecker cannot distinguish between "wreck" and "wreak," both properly spelled, or even between "wreak" and "reek."

Lo and behold: a columnist turned out a piece about going to mass on Saturday evening. He did this "to avoid the riggers of the Sunday morning routine." It seemed an unkind thing to say. The versatile Deion Sanders, outfielder and cornerback, wanted a football contract "commiserate" with the top defenders in the league. A junior guard on a basketball team was "caught up in the throws of modern marketing." The gremlins give us a "waste band" on khaki pants, a "bridal path" for equestrians, a Friars Club roast with "no holes barred." A navigator "pours over" his maps. A guitarist strikes "random cords." Last spring Barbra Streisand canceled a concert because of "inflamed vocal chords." The late Tip O'Neill "rose from Democratic ward healer to become Speaker of the House." At a hockey game, the air was punctuated by bursts of "epitaphs." A disabled man "walks with a shuffling gate." A young man "was busy sewing wild oats."

Will writers ever master homophones? Let us not wait "with baited breath," as SMITHSONIAN once portrayed President Bush. The devils are everywhere. In Florida one may enjoy a New Year's Eve "full-coarse dinner." Is everyone straight on "bare" and "bear"? No way. The management of a swimming pool undergoing remodeling asks patrons to "bare with us" until the work is done. A posh restaurant in Boca Raton relaxed its old coat-and-tie rule for men: "Those who show up bearing arms are welcomed." They are? I gravely doubt it, but these violent days, you never know.

Anecdotes? You want *anecdotes*? I have them by the bushel. A California-based company was marketing "an anecdote for garlic breath." A Kentucky veterinarian sought an anecdote for antifreeze poisoning in dogs. In Washington, D.C., two homesick ol' boys opened an authentic redneck grill: "This place will be an anecdote to Washington's sense of over-importance." Washington can use it.

Ah, well. We learn to live with homophones and sometimes love their quirky charm. A boat owner advertised a "250-pound wench," used but in good condition. An Ohio rescue squad had to find "a wench to lift a tractor" off an injured farm worker. So it goes. Pest-control people protect us from "wood investing organisms." Soldiers endure a "fuselage" of bullets. Offshore there rises a "title wave."

Do writers in foreign languages have the same problems we have in English? Do they have homophones? And terrible lapses in spelling and grammar? I would insist that our troubles are worse than theirs, but as Mrs. Malaprop says, "caparisons are odorous." Are things growing worse, as public education slackens? Perhaps it is best to listen to Mrs. M., just before the curtain falls: "No delusions to the past!" With all its perils and pitfalls, English remains the loveliest language of them all. We ought to use it lovingly.

"A posh restaurant in Boca Raton relaxed its old coat-and-tie rule for men: 'Those who show up bearing arms are welcomed.' They are? These violent days, you never know."

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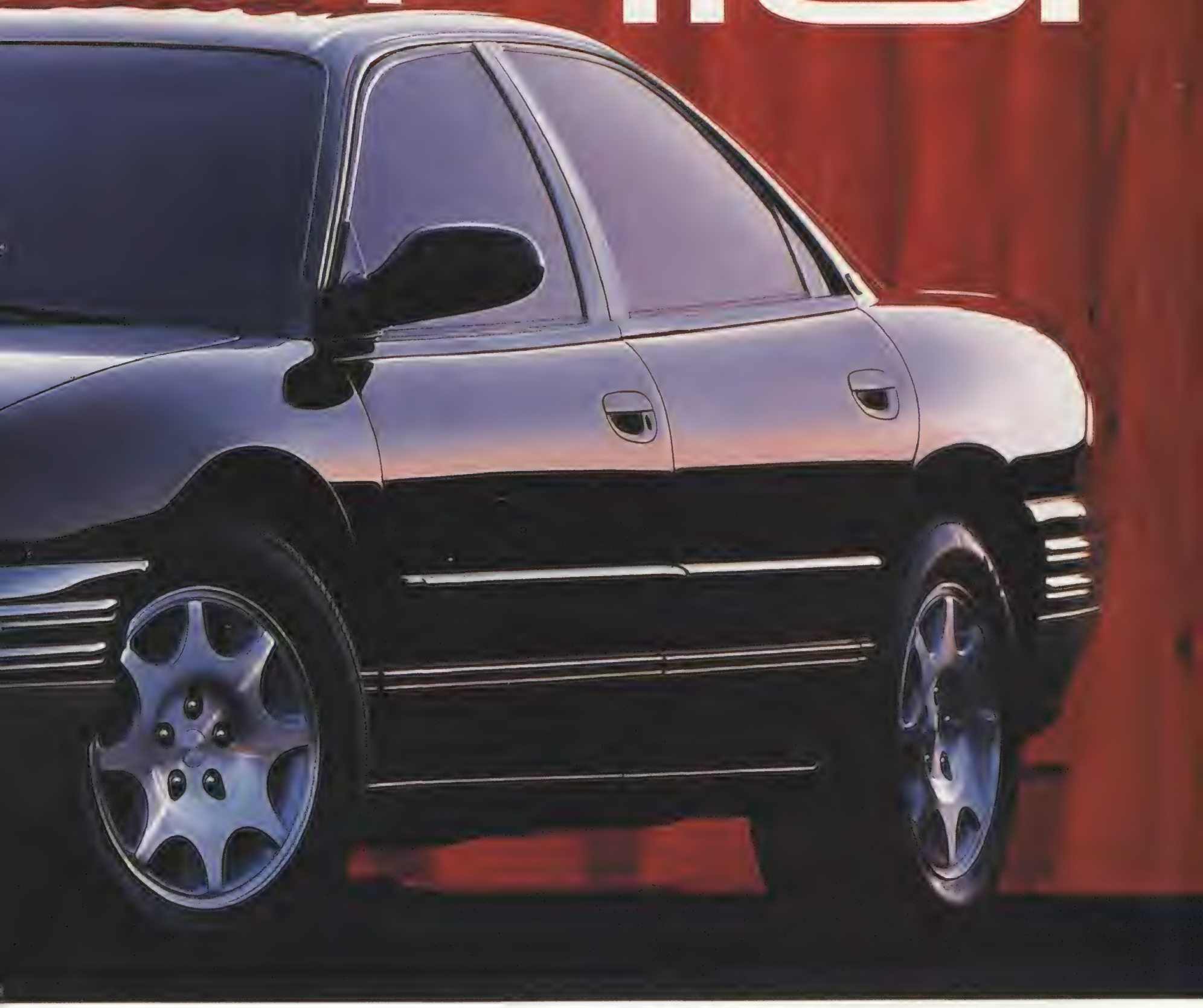

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In photograph (opposite) used as basis for a Ripley cartoon, man descends a staircase by "cranial hopping."

Hamming it up in Brazil (above) in 1920s, the dapper impresario, a nonsmoker, brandishes a giant cigar.

By Donald Dale Jackson

Believe it or not, Rip was almost as odd as his 'items'

Incredible! Incomparable! Robert L. Ripley, who won fame and fortune by celebrating the outlandish, was himself a prime example

In the mid-1930s, when Robert LeRoy (*Believe It or Not!*) Ripley was riding the highest crest of his fame as a cartoonist, showman, impresario of the outlandish and merchant of the strange, the lads of the New York Boys Club were polled on whose job they would most want if they could have any they wished. The boys picked Ripley—J. Edgar Hoover finished second, James Cagney third and President Franklin Roosevelt seventh. It was the perfect choice: Ripley's whole life was a kind of extended childhood, and he never outgrew the gee-whiz fascination with the world and its peculiarities that made him a pop-culture phenomenon on the order of Barnum and Disney.

Nonstop traveler, gifted cartoonist, shy and awkward radio-and-television personality, flamboyant dresser, self-promoter and party giver, maestro of the "odditoriums" that evolved into the museums that still bear his name today, Ripley was a star of a more innocent era. It was a time when our curiosity still exceeded our wariness, when we had not yet been battered to our knees by information overload, and a time when Ripley's announcer could present him as "that incomparable, inimitable, illimitable, inestimable introducer of immeasurable, incalculable and incredible impossibilities."

Ripley's daily cartoon, called *Believe It or Not!*, was syndicated by King Features to 325 newspapers in 33 countries, with a total readership of some 80 million. His books, collections of the most bizarre items from his cartoons, were best-sellers. He lectured, appeared in film shorts, broadcast his weekly radio show and in some

years received more mail than Santa Claus. Ripley it was who told us about the one-armed paper hanger with hives in Massachusetts, about the two Ukrainians who slapped each other's faces for 36 hours straight, the Chinese man who lived to be 254, and the man whose name was Ab C. Defghi, along with thousands of other phenomena he liked to call "shockers."

He had what one acquaintance described somewhat condescendingly as the "curiosity of the unlearned." Everything intrigued him: he wanted to go everywhere and see everything, and he kept count of the countries he visited, ending with a total of 160 to 200—the woeful imprecision resulting from the liberties he took, as he was wont to do elsewhere, with the strict definition of "country." Ripley wasn't fussy—he listed "Sicily," "Sark," "Channel Islands," "Garden of Eden" and "Tangier," among other dubious entries, as countries.

The lines were always fuzzy with Ripley. The most elusive line was between truth and distortion in the cartoons. The great majority of the outrageous "facts" he published were verifiably true, but his method was less than airtight. In general, a written source (any written source) would do for confirmation of a Ripley claim, and errors consequently occurred. Ripley insisted that he was never wrong, but he added, with the disarming self-deprecation that was one of his saving graces, a promise "never to be wrong again."

The "taste" line—what, if anything, was taboo—was another one he had trouble with. Grotesqueries of almost any sort were OK. Even his admirers suspect that the line between good and bad taste came not from the affable Rip but from his editors and producers.

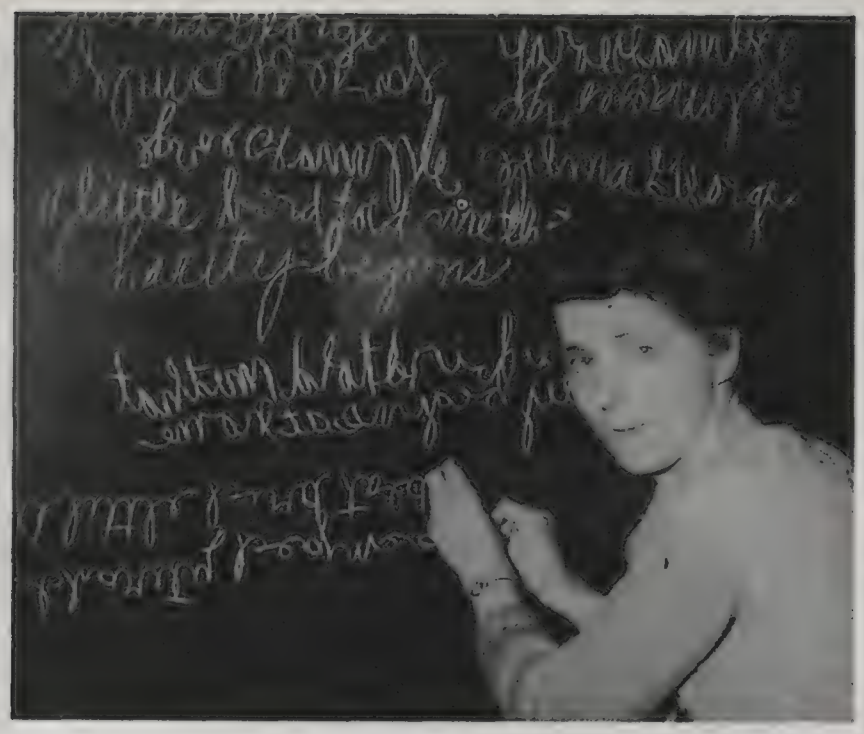
Because he was a showman above all else, there was no sharp break between his public and private lives. He was married once, briefly and apparently unhappily, and had no children. He threw frequent parties at his mansion on Long Island Sound and his duplex in Manhattan but would occasionally slip away to draw when an idea for a cartoon seized him. He was selective about his excesses, shunning gambling and smoking while concentrating on liquor and women. With his buck-toothed gawkiness he was clearly no sex symbol, but he was nonetheless always surrounded by women. His friends describe him as being shy with strangers and yet a self-assured man of the world, a kind of forelock-tugging potentate. He earned as much as a million dollars a year, spending it as fast as he could on travel, his collections of exotica and his lavish lifestyle.

Still another foggy line with Ripley is the one between the facts of his life and the embroidered version he was forever foisting on interviewers, some of which has survived. He told the passport office and others at various times that he was born in 1891, 1892 and 1893, settling finally on Christmas 1893, the date that appeared in his obituaries. But a census document shows that his real birthdate was December 1890—he was 58 when he died in 1949, not 55 as the papers reported. He routinely gilded the story of how he first came up with the title *Believe It or Not!* in 1918, and he was cagey about whether other artists ever drew in his name (they did). He often denied that he was ever married.

The same census that records Ripley's birth in 1890 lists his first name as "LeRoy" (he added the "Robert" later) and his father's occupation as "laborer." He grew up in a small house in Santa Rosa, California, in the wine country north of San Francisco. He could draw from the beginning; a high school teacher permitted the "dear, shy boy" to submit drawings in lieu of papers before Ripley dropped out in his senior year. Besides his gift for drawing, young Ripley was a good enough baseball player to pitch for a semipro team. Posters he drew for his team's games caught the eye of a journalist who persuaded an editor at the *San Francisco Bulletin* to look at them, resulting in the offer of an $8-a-week job as a sports cartoonist. He moved from there to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where his illustrations showed the bold strokes that became the hallmark of his work.

He later enjoyed telling the story that he left the *Chronicle* and lit out for New York when his request for a $2.50 weekly raise was denied. He became sports cartoonist at the *New York Globe* and managed to work in a spring-training tryout with John McGraw's New York Giants, a bid that was cut short when Ripley broke his pitching (and drawing) arm. According to his friend and biographer Bob Considine, it was at about that time that Ripley became infatuated with vividly colorful clothes, a taste that persisted through decades of two-toned shoes, batwing ties, houndstooth jackets and Chi-

Though author Jackson was never featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not!, *he believes he should have been, as he was adopted and raised by a family of tortoises.*



Woman in Canton, Ohio, uses blackboard to demonstrate her skills at writing simultaneously with both hands.

Proud Texan shows off his "snake cucumber." Most of Rip's cartoons were drawn from pictures like this.

Puerto Rican gentleman exhibits the kind of contortion Ripley bent over backward to get into cartoon strip.

Old saw "as busy as a one-armed paper hanger with hives" is embodied by Ripley find in Massachusetts.

Florida pals model outfits they made from shredded newspapers. Each costume required 700 yards of thread.

Ripley friends cavort at 1948 party celebrating 30th anniversary of *Believe It or Not!* cartoon feature.

Hosting the cast of a Broadway show, Ripley (bottom right) beams during a cruise on his Chinese junk.

nese robes. Newsman Bugs Baer, who became one of Ripley's closest friends, once described his ensemble as resembling "a paint factory that got hit by lightning."

The *Believe It or Not!* breakthrough came in December 1918. Barren of ideas for his cartoon one day, Ripley strung together a collage of sports oddities—a man who hopped 100 yards in 11 seconds, another who jumped rope 11,800 times nonstop, a third who remained underwater for 6½ minutes, and others—and submitted it to his editor with the title *Champs and Chumps.* As Ripley told it, he changed the heading to *Believe It or Not!* at the last moment and—wham!—instant smash. But according to Edward Meyer, vice president and archivist of present-day Ripley Entertainment Inc., based in Orlando, Florida, the *Believe It or Not!* title didn't appear until the following year. The cartoon did attract comment, and Rip was asked to do more of the same. Though not an overnight hit, within a few years it was a regular daily feature, and when the *Globe* folded, Ripley took it to the *New York Post.*

His home for most of the 1920s was a suite at the New York Athletic Club, where he spent his free time playing handball so well that he won the city championship. Always sports-minded, he initially concentrated on sports in his cartoons but soon broadened the focus to embrace oddities in every imaginable category—human, animal, historical, scientific, whatever. He filled scrapbooks with clippings that contained that special something he sought: the man who fell 16 floors and suffered only bruises, the hen that laid 312 eggs in 308 days, the pianist who played for 66 consecutive hours, the will written on an eggshell.

Ripley's best find was a young Austrian-born linguist and researcher named Norbert Pearlroth, who spoke 14 languages and had the library diligence that Ripley lacked. "Rip was never much for tedious application," his friend Hazel Storer, who worked on his radio shows, recalls. When Ripley first met Pearlroth, he asked him if he knew any "believe it or nots," and the well-prepared Pearlroth mentioned a church in Santa Rosa, California, made from a single tree. Ripley, who remembered the church from his boyhood, was bowled over.

Though his name was rarely mentioned, Pearlroth became the granite foundation at the base of the *Believe It or Not!* empire. He worked ten hours a day, six days a week, in the main reading room of the New York Public Library. "Ripley took his word without question," Edward Meyer says, "and because some of his sources were in foreign languages, nobody checked behind Pearlroth."

By the mid-1920s, Ripley's cartoons were being syndicated in several dozen papers, and his editors indulged his itch for travel. He went around the world on one trip and around South America on another. He sent back illustrated daily articles on the peculiar phenomena he was forever encountering, sometimes aided by Pearlroth's preliminary spadework, while enjoying the opportunity to circumvent Prohibition. He attended a banquet in Peru, he reported, where "much '*una mas*' [one more] was drank." His crisp prose style brimmed with breezy humor. Interviewing the president of Pana-

ma, who spoke no English even as Ripley spoke no Spanish, he wrote that "we both talked fluently without disturbing each other."

Shortly after Charles Lindbergh made the first solo flight across the Atlantic, Ripley ran an item saying that "Lindbergh was the 67th man to make a nonstop flight over the Atlantic Ocean." This jab at the superhero of the day provoked a clamorous uproar that didn't subside until 170,000 irate letters had reached Ripley. He righteously explained that Lindbergh's flight had been preceded by the two-man trip by John Alcock and A. Whitten Brown in 1919 and crossings by two dirigibles, one carrying 31 men and the other 33.

The explanation, though accurate, had the whiff of the technicality about it, as Ripley's revelations often did. His claim that "Buffalo Bill never shot a buffalo," for example, rested on the fact that the beasts Bill dispatched were technically bison, just as the Ripley assertion that "a pound of feathers weighs more than a pound of gold" derived from the fact that the troy pound used in weighing gold contains only 12 ounces.

But the Lindbergh cartoon, coupled with the tremendous success of his first *Believe It or Not!* book a few months later, made Ripley a national sensation. His ascension to journalistic stardom was ratified when William Randolph Hearst ordered King Features to sign him to a $100,000-a-year syndication contract in 1929. Ripley agreed, in addition, to make 26 film shorts and do a weekly radio show. He was no longer an artisan but an industry, even though in some ways he remained a shy and awkward kid. "I think he was a small-town guy who could never believe his good fortune," says Robert Masterson, president of the current incarnation of the *Believe It or Not!* company. With its 21 museums worldwide, the company perpetuates Ripley's legacy, acquiring some 1,200 new oddities each year.

On the loose in New Guinea, Ripley takes his hat off to native dancers he encountered at Port Moresby.

The biggest liar in the world?

Writing to Ripley became a national pastime. Three thousand letters a day, more than a million a year, poured into the office that he rarely visited (he preferred to work at home). His fans specialized in creative correspondence. Letters were addressed in Morse code, sign language and Confederate Civil War code. They were composed on tin, wood, turkey bones and, in one case, on a grain of rice. Some were addressed to "the biggest liar in the world," while others bore a rippling line or were simply torn—ripped—to signify "Ripley."

Those letters were a major source of *Believe It or Not!* items, supplementing Pearlroth's research and the wonders Ripley found on his travels. "Dear Rip," a Texan wrote, "My two brothers, Sam and Morris, and myself, Ben Neiman, were sitting in my office when a total stranger came in and asked to use the telephone. I con-

Unlike his companion, Ripley remains shod while holding the business end of a water pipe during trip in Iraq.

Face-slapping cartoon epitomizes Ripley's fascination with bizarre behavior and exotic or little-known peoples.

sented and he dialed a number and said, 'Hello Sam, this is Ben, I am waiting for Morris . . .'" Would-be cartoonists sometimes submitted their own work. In 1937 a 12-year-old boy named Charles Schulz, from St. Paul, Minnesota, made Ripley's strip with a sketch of his razor-blade-eating dog. He grew up to draw *Peanuts*.

Edward Meyer was once assigned to categorize the cartoon subjects. "I finished with about 340 categories," he recalls. "Sports and animals were the biggest, but there were architecture, records, occupations, religion, mineral and vegetable oddities, people who did weird things or had weird skills, puzzles, math, survival stories, coincidences . . ." One Ripley shocker inspired a law. After he wrote that "The Star-Spangled Banner" had never been officially recognized as the national anthem, more than five million people signed a petition urging Congress to do so. In 1931 the lawmakers complied.

Rip especially prized word and number items. He published palindromes ("Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba") and anagrams ("O, bet I never toil" for "believe it or not"). He never tired of gravestone inscriptions like the one in Maryland that reads, "Here Lies an Atheist—All Dressed Up and No Place to Go." One of his favorite examples of what he called the "amazing fecundity of figures" was the boy who offered to begin work for a penny a day if his salary were doubled daily for a month; his pay on the final day of the month would have been $5,368,709.12.

For years Ripley offered to prove the accuracy of any item, but despite his boasts there inevitably were mistakes. He reported erroneously that Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee were first cousins once removed, and another time he got the person who fired the first shot of the Civil War wrong, attributing it to a South Carolina bishop instead of a cadet. "There were not hundreds of errors, but maybe one or two a year," Meyer says. "Ripley believed that if he had something in print it was gospel, and if he didn't have it in writing he tried to get a photograph. He could never substantiate his claim about the 254-year-old man (whose name, appropriately, was Li Yung). The note in the file says 'can't answer.'"

Ripley and a promoter named C. C. (Cash and Carry) Pyle collaborated on a sideshow at the 1933-34 Chicago World's Fair that Ripley dubbed an "odditorium." Though he had called his first book a collection of "wonders, miracles, freaks, monstrosities and almost-impossibilities," he had now abandoned the word "freak" in favor of "oddity," which he defined as "a high-class freak." Whatever he called them, the human exhibits at the Chicago show and those that followed in San Francisco, Dallas and elsewhere were a moneymaking menagerie. "The Great Waldo" swallowed and regurgitated a live mouse. Another man hammered long nails into his nose; yet another lifted weights attached to his eyelids. Ripley boasted that in Chicago he needed six beds to accommodate the 100 people a day who fainted.

He also traveled the lecture circuit. While lecturing, he became a *Believe It or Not!* himself—as he might have put it, "The man who had to *pay* to see *his own* performance!" Speaking in a theater where the orchestra pit had been covered by a piece of fabric, he stepped forward and tumbled ten feet. Unable to climb out of the

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And remember, for the health of your dog, please visit your veterinarian regularly.

Purina® Fit & Trim®: What Every Dog Should Be.™

A "Mona Lisa" made with 63 pieces of toast by Japanese artist is on display at Ripley museum in Mexico City.

pit, he exited through a door and found himself on the street, where he had to walk around the block and then purchase a ticket to get back in. The crowd loved it.

He was no more adroit, at least at first, as a radio performer. Hazel Storer's husband, Doug, who produced Ripley's radio shows beginning in 1934, described their first meeting in a *Reader's Digest* "Most Unforgettable Character" piece. Ripley's costume was a blue shirt, orange tie, plaid jacket, fawn-colored slacks and black-and-white shoes. He was so nervous that he dropped his script four times, each time nearly knocking over the microphone stand when he stooped to pick up the script. The charitable phrase for his voice was "non-radiogenic." "He hated to go on the air," Hazel Storer recalls. "He'd always have a shot of gin beforehand."

As the show evolved, it won a following almost *because* of Ripley's awkwardness—the public seemed to like it—and because he was game for anything. Though he couldn't swim, he descended into a tank in a diving suit to hand-feed a school of sharks; he accompanied a snake handler into a rattlesnake pit (a stunt that nearly backfired when the lights went out); and he interviewed a parachutist as they both made a two-mile free fall. Another hit was a dramatic broadcast Ripley did in 1940 from the Grand Canyon while accompanying a river-runner on a dangerous nighttime run through the Colorado rapids; with him was a 31-year-old announcer named Barry Goldwater, whose family's business advertised on the Phoenix station that carried the show.

Ripley bought his dream house in 1934, a 28-room stone mansion in Mamaroneck, New York, on a small island linked to the mainland by a causeway. The house, which he named BION for *Believe It or Not!* became both the center of his life and a kind of upscale odditorium. He worked mornings in an upstairs studio, sometimes joined by squirrels and chipmunks lured to his window with food—he was always crazy about animals.

Stop talking when the statue nods

Ripley filled the main rooms with his treasures: Aztec masks, a collection of more than 500 beer steins, a spiky medieval torture device called the Iron Maiden, chastity belts, a statue that supposedly nodded when a woman talked too much. "There are people who have to fill silence," Hazel Storer says. "Bob was that way with space—every inch of wall and floor had to be filled."

People were constantly coming and going. In addition to the housekeeper, driver (Ripley never drove) and other servants, the Lord of BION invariably had four or five young women in residence: the lady of the moment and those in waiting. They were often Asian. Hazel Storer remembers wandering upstairs one time and discovering Ripley in a chair, thronelike, with four women on the floor around him. "He wouldn't swear in front of a woman," she recalls, "but he would verbally abuse his girls violently. I saw him reduce one to tears once."

Parties at BION featured elaborate preparations and long guest lists, sometimes including celebrity friends like Jack Dempsey, Gypsy Markoff and Lowell Thomas. "He had a way of greeting you as if you were the guest he most wanted to see," Hazel Storer says. "He had the charm of a big friendly dog." He organized softball games and gave boat rides on his fleet of strange craft from around the world. At one soiree the trees were labeled and hung with hors d'oeuvres—an "eggplant tree" with hard-boiled eggs, an "African sausage tree" with hot dogs, and so on.

Ripley was sentimental, unable to resist a sob story and faithful to old friends. He installed the door from his family's Santa Rosa house in the bedroom of his mansion. When an editor he had known in San Francisco turned up in New York, he showered attention on the man, offering him his car and driver and visiting him in the hospital when he fell ill. In his will, Ripley remembered everyone who had helped him, including the journalist who steered him to his first cartooning job.

He acquired a spacious duplex on Central Park West in Manhattan in 1941, furnishing it with more of his exotica. It was there that Robert Whiteman, then a concert violinist but later a licensing agent for various Ripley enterprises, first met him. "There were floor-to-ceiling windows with a panoramic view of the park," Whiteman recalls. "He wore a kind of kimono, and Chinese girls were fluttering around. He showed me a collection of petrified raindrops, I remember, and an amazing wooden statue a Japanese sculptor had made of himself, using his own hair and fingernails. What struck me was Ripley's enthusiasm—he was still like a kid, and he fed off my enthusiasm. When I saw him a couple of years later, he was beginning to look dissipated, like he'd binged a bit by then."

He had doubtless binged more than a bit. On a 1948 sea voyage to Asia, a moody Rip spent much of his time in his stateroom. He was devastated when China, always his favorite country, fell to the Communists. When he began a weekly television show in 1949, he looked florid and heavy, and his voice sometimes sounded slurred. "His blood pressure was terrible," Hazel Storer says. "He had a series of small strokes. He never stopped traveling and drinking and pushing himself." Both of his parents had died young, his father at 51 and his mother at 47. After he blacked out while doing a TV segment, he checked into a New York hospital, where he died of a heart attack three days later.

Though rarely introspective, Ripley had once written an old California friend that "my work is never done, and peace of mind I never have. Never become too ambitious or you will suffer always." But if Ripley suffered for his ambition, he also enjoyed his life, and his legacy was a limitless fascination with the world in all its wondrous diversity. "He knew that caviar and money didn't matter," says his friend Li Ling Ai, a woman he admired as a writer and expert on China. "It was life itself that was exciting." Doug Storer called him the "greatest hayseed ever to succeed in show business," while writer Stephen King credits Ripley with showing him the fine line between "the fabulous and the humdrum." But Hazel Storer captures him best: "He was just fun, fun every day." He lies beside his parents in Santa Rosa, in the Odd Fellows Cemetery.

Spectacular facility in Grand Prairie, Texas, is one of 21 Ripley museums currently in operation worldwide. Five more are supposed to open in such far-flung locations as New York City and Jakarta, Indonesia.

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HAVE YOU DRIVEN A FORD LATELY?

Ford

As his native region's last practitioner of the itinerant basketmaker's skills, Hiroshima continues to produce objects such as (clockwise from left) hip basket, taro-washing colander, backpack, bean paste sieve, eel trap.

In the pursuit of perfect craft: an artisan's lifework

Over decades of inspired workmanship, Hiroshima Kazuo has fashioned baskets that bespeak the everyday life of an isolated rural Japan

Deep in the mountain fastness of southern Japan's Hinokage region lies a country of swift rivers, deep valleys and verdant forests. The rugged terrain is punctuated by terraced-hillside farmsteads and remote hamlets that lay for at least five centuries, until the post-World War II era, virtually untouched by time.

Hinokage remains a district rich in the traditions of rural existence; it is also the home of one of Japan's long-unsung local craftsmen. Over more than 60 years, Hiroshima Kazuo has handcrafted baskets; his creations, now sought out avidly by collectors, are prized for their utility and beauty. Until early summer, visitors to the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery will have a rare opportunity to view Hiroshima's works. "A Basketmaker in Rural Japan," an exhibition celebrating Hiroshima's artistry, will continue through July 9. (For anyone not able to travel to Washington, an accompanying book with photographs, bearing the same title as the

exhibition and coauthored by Sackler associate curator Louise Allison Cort and Nakamura Kenji, offers a splendid armchair excursion.)

In 1932, when he was 17 years old, Hiroshima completed a demanding two-year apprenticeship and established himself as a basketmaker. It was a choice rooted in necessity: as the second-born son, he would not inherit his farming family's land. A childhood injury had left him lame in one leg, and he desired work that would render him self-reliant.

He began traveling from farm to farm, village to village, handcrafting new baskets to order and repairing old ones. His craft was essential to the day-to-day labors on a small farm. Nearly every task—storing cooked rice; portioning out fodder to cattle or feed to horses; bringing in firewood from the mountainside; shouldering loads of shiitake mushrooms harvested from the crevices of tree trunks; trapping fish or eels from the streams—required a specific bamboo container or implement.

Hiroshima produced whatever baskets a household needed, be it backpacks for transporting shiitake or cages for trapping river crabs. His lot was not an easy one: as was customary for itinerant craftsmen, he worked outside in all kinds of weather, sheltering under the broad eaves of a farmhouse. "In the winter months," he recalls, "my hands would stiffen. I used to dream of being able to work inside the house." He labored from dawn to dusk—in summer, 12 to 14 hours; in winter, 10 hours. The work required exactitude and skill—splitting and peeling bamboo stalks, cutting strips to precise and consistent measure, weaving and plaiting, binding rim and handle and lid.

After World War II, the peripatetic phase of his career did end. By 1959 Hiroshima and his wife had settled in the village of Yato. From his workshop there, he completed a major commission during the late 1980s. At the

Details offer a window on Hiroshima's surpassing craftsmanship: (clockwise, from the top left) backpack rim; hip basket base, with reinforcing bamboo strips; eel basket and lid. Opposite are a fishing creel (foreground) and a basket used for carrying manure.

behest of two local patrons of Hinokage crafts, Hiroshima produced a representative range of his baskets. Nakamura Kunio and Nakamura Kenji, father and son, presented these objects as a gift to the Anthropology Department of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in 1988. The 103 objects in the current exhibition constitute the partial contents of that holding, the Nakamura Kunio Collection.

Each basket, finished to perfection, reflects Hiroshima's conviction that an implicit compact conjoins a craftsman and the customer who takes up that object in everyday life. "The handmade thing," he observes, "forms a link between the hearts of the person who made it and the person who uses it."

With the passage of time, Hiroshima's baskets have transcended even their identity as exquisite pieces of folk art. Each object is now testament to a vanishing way of life, of farmers living off the land, harvesting from field and vegetable plot, collecting mushrooms, plucking tea leaves in the valleys. As the children of Hinokage's farms gravitate toward the city, the baskets have become artifacts reflecting the rhythms of a hard but tranquil lot.

Kathleen Burke

"I'm going to the bathroom more than ever. I wonder what's wrong with me."

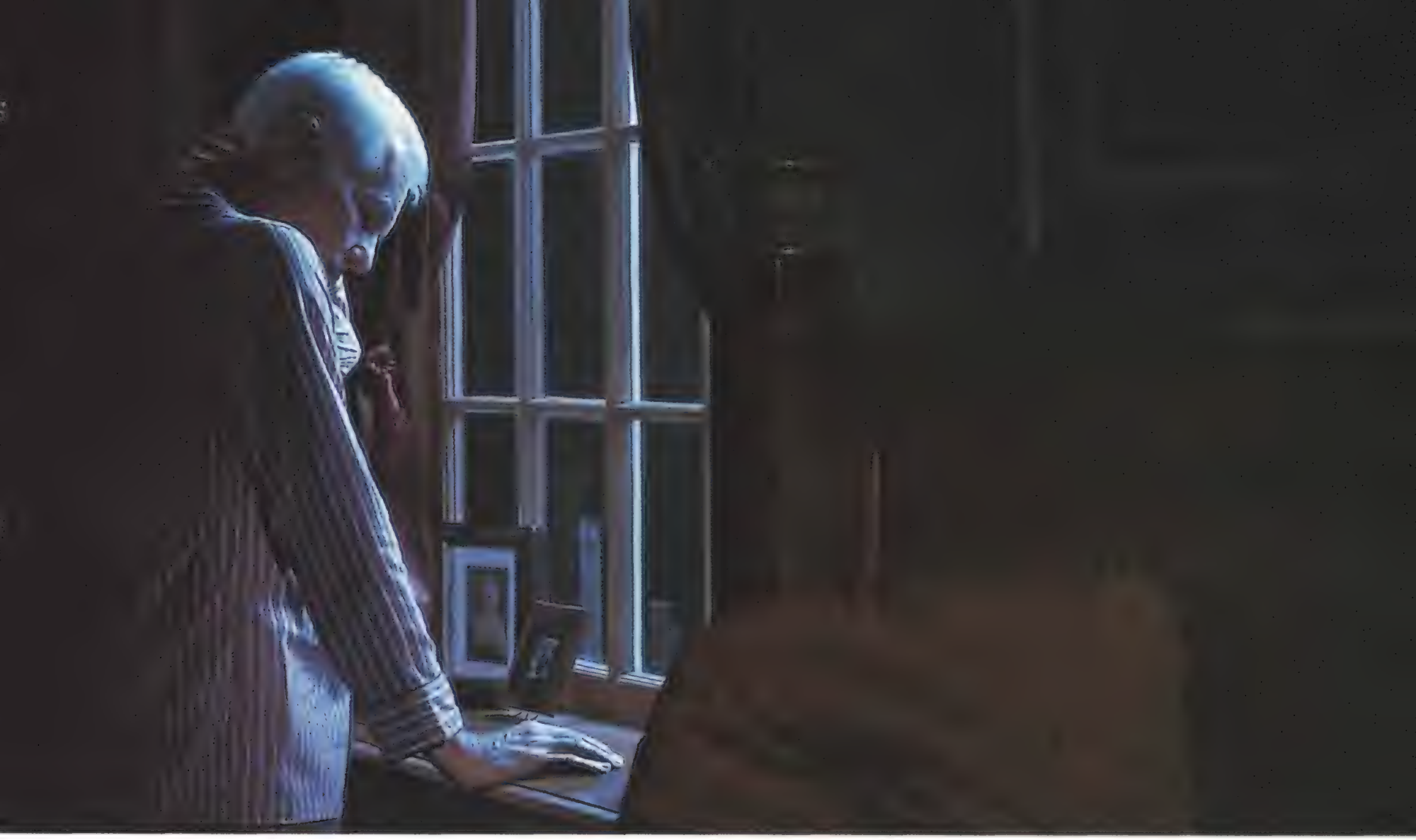
Your urinary symptoms may be caused by a condition called benign prostate enlargement or BPH.

Is this you?	Yes	No
Do you get up more than once or twice a night to urinate?	☐	☐
Do you often have sudden, uncontrollable urges to urinate?	☐	☐
Do you have a hesitant or slow urine stream?	☐	☐
Do you have a frequent need to urinate?	☐	☐

If you answered yes to even one question, tell your doctor.

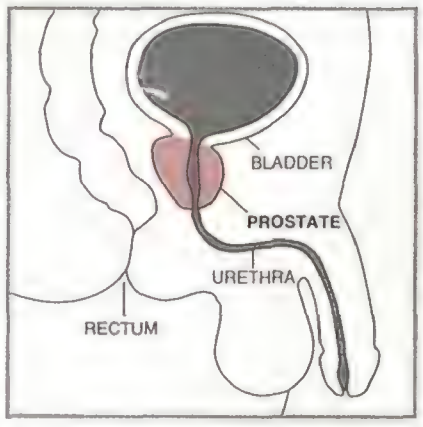
BPH is not cancer and does not lead to cancer, although the two conditions can exist at the same time. Remember, only a doctor can evaluate your symptoms and their possible causes.

Today, symptomatic BPH can be treated by your doctor in several ways. The options are monitoring the condition with regular checkups, surgery, or oral medicines. One oral medicine is PROSCAR® (Finasteride), the only prescription medicine for the treatment of symptomatic BPH that can shrink the prostate.



PROSCAR works by blocking a hormone that can cause the prostate to enlarge. *But it is important to know: PROSCAR doesn't work for everyone. Although the prostate may shrink, there may not be an improvement in urinary symptoms. However, in clinical studies with PROSCAR, some men have seen an improvement in their urinary symptoms after 2 weeks. Others have found that PROSCAR took up to several months to help them.* Because all men are different, you and your doctor will need to determine how PROSCAR is working for you.

If you have any urinary symptoms, see your family doctor or a urologist soon, and ask about PROSCAR. For free information to help you discuss your symptoms with your doctor, call 1-800-579-3745.



The prostate surrounds part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it can squeeze the urethra and cause urinary problems.

For the treatment of symptomatic BPH

PROSCAR® 5mg
(FINASTERIDE)

The only medicine that can shrink the prostate.

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Please see patient information on the next page.

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PATIENT INFORMATION ABOUT
PROSCAR® (Prahs-car)
Generic name: finasteride (fin-AS-tur-eyed)

PROSCAR is for the treatment of symptomatic benign prostatic hyperplasia and for use by men only.

Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR if you have a medical condition called benign prostatic hyperplasia or BPH. This occurs only in men.

Please read this information, as well as the leaflet which accompanies your medication, before you start taking PROSCAR. Also, read the leaflet each time you renew your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss PROSCAR when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups.

What is BPH?
BPH is an enlargement of the prostate gland. After age 50, most men develop enlarged prostates. The prostate is located below the bladder. As the prostate enlarges, it may slowly restrict the flow of urine. This can lead to symptoms such as:

- a weak or interrupted urinary stream
- a feeling that you cannot empty your bladder completely
- a feeling of delay or hesitation when you start to urinate
- a need to urinate often, especially at night
- a feeling that you must urinate right away.

Treatment options for BPH
There are three main treatment options for BPH:

- **Program of monitoring or "Watchful Waiting".** If a man has an enlarged prostate gland and no symptoms or if his symptoms do not bother him, he and his doctor may decide on a program of monitoring which would include regular checkups, instead of medication or surgery.
- **Medication.** Your doctor may prescribe PROSCAR for BPH. See **"What PROSCAR does"** below.
- **Surgery.** Some patients may need surgery. Your doctor can describe several different surgical procedures for BPH. Which procedure is best depends on your symptoms and medical condition.

What PROSCAR does
PROSCAR lowers levels of a key hormone called DHT (dihydrotestosterone), which is a major cause of prostate growth. Lowering DHT leads to shrinkage of the enlarged prostate gland in most men. This can lead to gradual improvement in urine flow and symptoms over the next several months. However, since each case of BPH is different, you should know that:

- Even though the prostate shrinks, you may NOT see an improvement in urine flow or symptoms.
- You may need to take PROSCAR for six (6) months or more to see whether it helps you.
- Even though you take PROSCAR and it may help you, it is not known whether PROSCAR reduces the need for surgery.

What you need to know while taking PROSCAR

- **You must see your doctor regularly.** While taking PROSCAR, you must have regular checkups. Follow your doctor's advice about when to have these checkups.
- **About side effects.** Like all prescription drugs, PROSCAR may cause side effects. Side effects due to PROSCAR may include impotence (or inability to have an erection) and less desire for sex. Each of these side effects occurred in less than 4% of patients in clinical studies. In some cases side effects went away while the patient continued to take PROSCAR.

  Some men taking PROSCAR may have a decrease in the amount of semen released during sex. This decrease does not appear to interfere with normal sexual function. Rarely, some men have reported breast swelling and/or tenderness or allergic reactions such as lip swelling and rash.

You should discuss side effects with your doctor before taking PROSCAR® (Finasteride) and anytime you think you are having a side effect.

- **Checking for prostate cancer.** Your doctor has prescribed PROSCAR for symptomatic BPH and not for cancer—but a man can have BPH and prostate cancer at the same time. Doctors usually recommend that men be checked for prostate cancer once a year when they turn 50 (or 40 if a family member has had prostate cancer). These checks should continue while you take PROSCAR. PROSCAR is not a treatment for prostate cancer.
- **About prostate specific antigen (PSA).** Your doctor may have done a blood test called PSA. PROSCAR can alter PSA values. For more information, talk to your doctor.
- **A warning about PROSCAR and pregnancy.**

  PROSCAR is for use by MEN only.

  PROSCAR is generally well tolerated in men. However, women who are pregnant, or women who could become pregnant, should avoid the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

  If the active ingredient is absorbed by a woman who is pregnant with a male baby, it may cause the male baby to be born with abnormalities of the sex organs. Therefore, any woman who is pregnant or who could become pregnant must not come into direct contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR.

Two of the ways in which a woman might absorb the active ingredient in PROSCAR are:

Sexual contact. Your semen may contain a small amount of the active ingredient of the drug. If your partner is pregnant, or if you and your partner decide to have a baby, you must stop taking PROSCAR and talk to your doctor. If your partner could become pregnant, proper use of a condom can reduce the risk of exposing her to your semen (discuss this further with your doctor).

Handling broken tablets. Women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant must not handle broken tablets of PROSCAR.

PROSCAR tablets are coated to prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling. If this coating is broken, the tablets should not be handled by women who are pregnant or who could become pregnant.

If a woman who is pregnant comes into contact with the active ingredient in PROSCAR, a doctor should be consulted. Remember, these warnings apply only if the woman exposed to PROSCAR is pregnant or could become pregnant.

How to take PROSCAR
Follow your doctor's advice about how to take PROSCAR. You must take it every day. You may take it with or between meals. To avoid forgetting to take PROSCAR, it may be helpful to take it the same time every day.

Do not share PROSCAR with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you.

Keep PROSCAR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT 'PROSCAR' AND BPH, TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR. IN ADDITION, TALK TO YOUR PHARMACIST OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

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By Ken Chowder

A writer who lived the adventures he portrayed

Stephen Crane was fascinated by the seamy side of life, but his works elevated fiction to new heights

If you didn't read it in high school, you probably studied it in college. Everyone knows *The Red Badge of Courage*, the Civil War novel that marked the beginning of modern American fiction. Published 100 years ago, it's universally recognized as a classic, but most people still don't know much about the brief and melodramatic life of the man who wrote it.

Stephen Crane did everything. He lived as a penniless and malnourished bohemian in New York City; he became famous virtually overnight; he was a close friend of some of the great writers of his day, including Joseph Conrad, Henry James, H. G. Wells and Ford Madox Ford; he piled up a mountain of debt while lording it over his minions at an immense medieval manor in England. Along the way, he wrote enough to fill 12 volumes of collected works—all before dying at the ripe old age of 28.

Most authors write about their experiences. As biographer Christopher Benfey has pointed out, Crane reversed the process; he tried to experience what he'd already written about. He began *The Red Badge of Courage* at 21, before he'd been within a thousand miles of war; a few years later, he became a daring war correspondent. He wrote about a prostitute, then fell in

Author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, published 100 years ago, looked boyish in correspondent's getup he wore during Greco-Turkish War in 1897.

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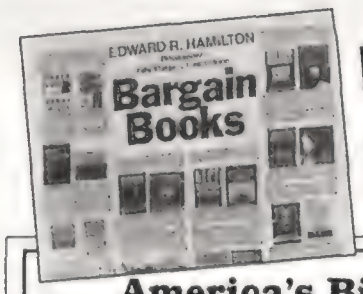
Crane, chin on fist in the center of the group, was a star catcher and shortstop on Syracuse University's 1891 baseball team.



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love with a real-life madam. He wrote stories about shipwrecks and subsequently found himself in one.

Who was this man?

Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1871, he was the 14th child of a 45-year-old woman whose four previous children had all died within a year of birth. His father was a Methodist minister who published tracts assailing such evils as tobacco, alcohol, dancing, theater, novels and baseball. "The dancing-master is the devil's drill-sergeant," the Rev. Jonathan T. Crane wrote. Crane's mother was a tireless spokeswoman for the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The Crane family said their daily prayers in a group, with everyone on their knees.

Stephen's childhood was marred by one misfortune after another. When he was 7, his father died. His sister Agnes, who'd nurtured his early literary interest, died when he was 12; two years later, an older brother was crushed to death between two freight cars.

Very soon, young Crane was out of control. A friend remembered him buying beer and drinking it in public at 16. "How you going to know about things at all less'n you *do* them?" Stephen said. The boy was in full revolt, against piety most of all. His mother sent him to military school, hoping it would strengthen his moral fiber; he was best known there for his prolific gambling, smoking and drinking. He entered Lafayette College as a freshman in 1890, but this was no ordinary freshman. When a crowd of boys came to his room to administer a dose of fraternity hazing, they were met by Crane, standing in a nightshirt with a loaded revolver in his hand. He was asked to

Ken Chowder, a documentary film writer, last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on the football coach Knute Rockne.*

leave after a single semester due to scholastic "delinquencies." A few weeks later, he tried Syracuse University; again, he lasted one term. One teacher wrote, "We looked upon him as an exceedingly bright young man . . . [but] he would not be cramped."

If he didn't study, what did he do? He did some reporting for the *New York Tribune* and, according to one classmate, he "gloried in talking with shambling figures who lurked in the dark doorways on deserted slum streets." It didn't take him long to discover where the "parlor-houses" were. "This is a dandy city at least, and I expect to have some fun here," he wrote a friend. The place he found most interesting was the police court. Soon he began working on a novel about life in the slums, called *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets.* He was 19 years old.

His lean years now began. It could be argued that all Crane's years were lean, but the three before the publication of *The Red Badge of Courage* were the hardest. In 1891 he tramped the streets of New York for months but couldn't find a job; he fell in love, only to discover that his beloved was about to be married; in December, his mother died. The next year, a newspaper job dissolved after a satirical piece he wrote about a parade offended the paraders. He fell in love again and was jilted again, this time by a woman who happened to be married at the time.

By early 1892, a version of *Maggie*—the story of a pretty girl "who blossomed in a mud-puddle" before falling into prostitution and suicide—was done. But no respectable publisher could be persuaded to issue the book. Its gritty locale of tenement, sweatshop and beer hall was unsettling. Its cutting irony and unsentimental approach ("Sentiment is the devil," Crane once said) were deeply disturbing. Its lurid scenes and profanity were shocking and unacceptable. "You'd think the book came straight from hell and they smelled the smoke," was Crane's comment about the rejections. He decided to borrow money against his inheri-

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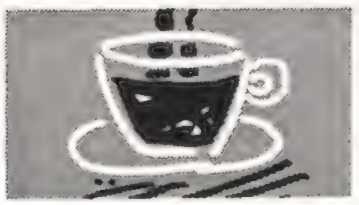

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tance from his mother in order to publish *Maggie* himself, using the pen name "Johnston Smith" because he wanted to avoid embarrassing his family. But he needn't have bothered—almost no one noticed the book. He printed 1,100 copies and probably sold fewer than 6.

With *Maggie*'s failure came more deprivation. Crane slept in rooms crammed with other artists and students—often freezing, often literally starving. He wore shoes to shreds. It seems likely that tuberculosis bacteria first entered his body in this desperate period. As a friend described him, "He seemed to have withered so that all the vitality of his body was concentrated in his head. He was a slender, sad-eyed slip of a youth." Crane himself was less romantic about his poverty. "I'd trade my entire future for 23 dollars in cash," he said. Throughout his life, his indifference to money was matched by his extreme need for it.

Crane's life in New York was an endless struggle; small wonder that he began to see life as a battle. But the conflict was not simply man against the world, God or nature; it was also within. "I saw the majestic forces which are arrayed against man's true success," he wrote. "I perceived that the fight was not going to be with the world but with myself." This interior landscape, the

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With his artist friend Corwin Linson, Crane (at left) struck a jaunty pose.

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war within the mind, was the true setting for his next book—a book he began when he was 21.

In the beginning, it was to be a "historical romance" about the War Between the States. "I deliberately started to do a pot-boiler," Crane said. "Well, I got interested in the thing in spite of myself." As he read accounts by veterans, he was struck by a repeated failing. "I wonder that *some* of those fellows don't tell how they *felt*," he said. If the old soldiers' feelings were a blank, he would fill it in. Stephen Crane began to write—at times "on the paper the meat came home in"—about the way war felt.

If history is a more or less objective overview of chaotic events, *The Red Badge* could be called the subjective underview, something akin to what an ant would feel like inside an anthill. The war is seen through the eyes of a young Union private in the two days of his first battle.

Because of its gritty realism, impressionistic style and iconoclastic views, *The Red Badge of Courage* was nothing less than revolutionary. It was the first popular American novel to question the romance and glory of war. Its hero, Henry Fleming, is "jest one little feller" in an anonymous war of mud and confusion. Henry had "dreamed of battles all his life—of vague and bloody conflicts that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. . . . He had imagined peoples secure in the shadow of his eagle-eyed prowess." But Henry is a very human "little feller": he runs at the first serious sniff of battle, displaying the "zeal of an insane sprinter." Then he rationalizes his flight: "He had done a good part in saving himself, who was a little piece of the army. . . . His actions had been sagacious things. They had been full of strategy. They were the work of a master's legs." Later he repents, and wishes he had a wound, "a red badge of courage." He gets his wish, but with Crane's typical ironic twist: the "red badge" comes from being clubbed in the head by his own comrade.

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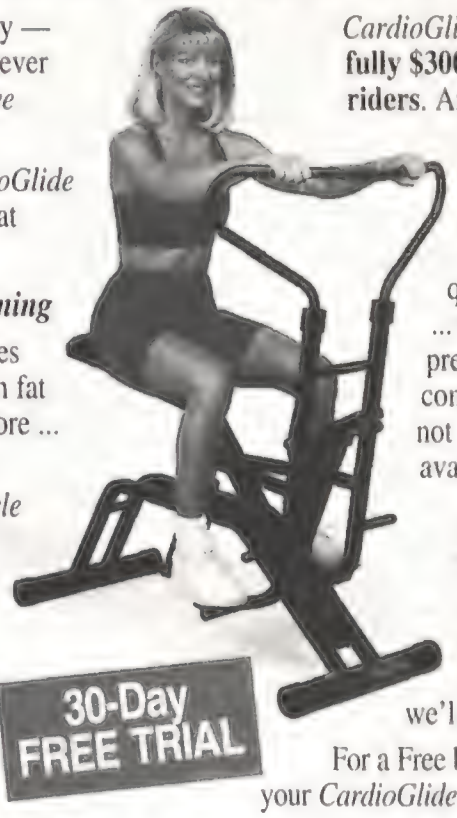

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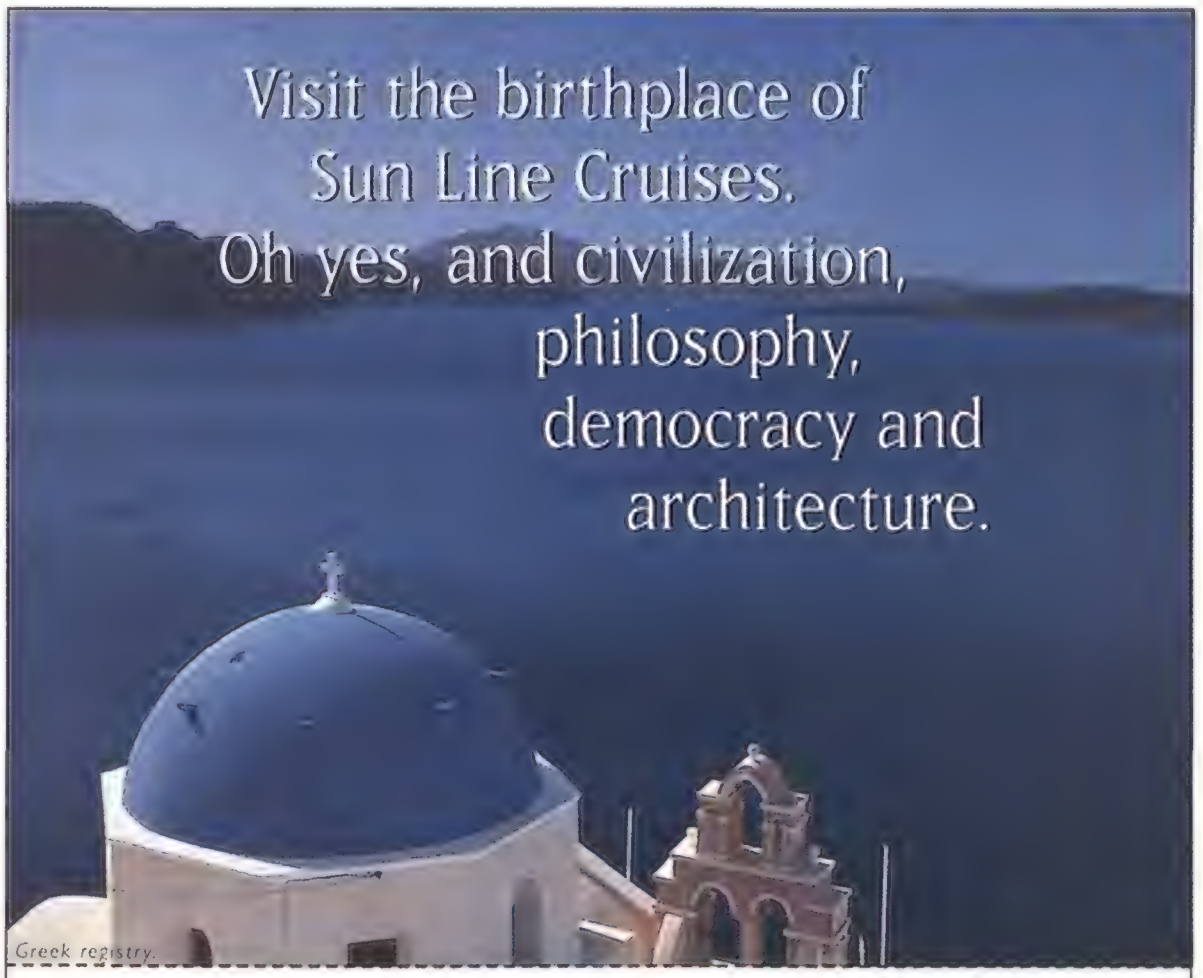

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Writer sprawled on couch in Linson's New York studio, where he read many of the books that provided raw material for *The Red Badge.*

When Henry watches ants crawl over the face of a soldier's decaying corpse, the patriotic veil is lifted from the face of war. This is why the book revolted the old guard of the military. A former general blasted it, writing that the hero "is an ignorant and stupid country lad . . . without a spark of patriotic feeling or even of soldierly ambition." Henry "is throughout an idiot or a maniac," the outraged general wrote. "No thrill of patriotic devotion . . . moves his breast, and not even an emotion of manly courage."

It is a mistake to see *The Red Badge* as being simply antiwar. Later Crane would write, "war is neither magnificent nor squalid; it is simply life." But it is intensified life, complete with stupidity and evil; courage, for Crane, is a magnificent thing all the same—absurd, yet magnificent.

And Henry does show courage: he returns to his unit and fights. There is certainly an ironic touch in the book's ending, when Henry imagines "an existence of soft and eternal peace," but Henry *has* felt both fear and courage. He has lived; "he was a man."

The Red Badge is written with a powerful economy and intensity that has variously been called "poetic," "symbolist," "impressionistic," "realistic" and "naturalistic." Even its language seemed new, and still does—a dead man's eyes are the "dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish"; of another man he said, "there was a great uncertainty about his knee joints"; a wounded man "had a shoeful of blood. He hopped like a schoolboy in a game."

The Red Badge of Courage was the zenith of Stephen Crane's writing career. It was first published in serial form by hundreds of newspapers; the book itself came out to what H. G. Wells called an "orgy of praise." "At times the description of battle is so vivid as to be almost suffocating," the New York *Press* wrote. "This is war from a new point of view. . . . One should be forever slow in calling an author a genius, but . . . *The Red Badge of Courage* [has] greater power and originality than can be girdled by the name of talent." The novel was a best-seller here and in England. In one year it went through 14 printings.

But even at this high point, the beginning of his fame, there was some-

thing ominous in Crane—as if his fate were already written on his dark, serious face. Early in 1895, he went West to do a little reporting and "get rid of his cough," according to the young Willa Cather, whom he met in Nebraska. Crane seemed to be "brooding over some impending disaster," Cather said. His eyes "seemed to be burning themselves out." As she later wrote, "Now that he is dead it occurs to me that all his life was a preparation for sudden departure." There was a strongly morbid streak in the young and sickly writer. After he visited the death chamber at Sing Sing, he wrote: "It is a fine short road to oblivion." The line could serve as his epitaph.

Crane went South from Nebraska to New Orleans, Galveston, San Antonio. He took the train to Mexico City, then headed into the badlands on horseback, where—in true Crane fashion—he was chased into the wilderness by a gang of bandits and saved by a detachment of *rurales*. He spent a month in southern Mexico: "There was nothing American about me save a large Smith and Wesson revolver."

The young author was a budding celebrity, and his life, as if to match his fame, began to turn into a series of melodramas and strange incidents—instigated, some have suggested, by Crane himself. Most of the spectacularly theatrical events of his life had one thing in common. In each of them, Crane was engaged in fierce struggle—against the police, the press and standards of public morality; against the cruel sea, enemy bullets and incurable disease; against violence, nature and death. In each of them, he was testing his own courage. In that sense, the rest of his life was an extension of *The Red Badge of Courage.*

Crane's pursuit of the coarse and seamy sides of life intensified with his fame. One night he joined a breadline waiting for stale crusts, then slept in a flophouse, just to see what it was like; two stories, "Men in the Storm" and "An Experiment in Misery," were the result. After deciding to examine New

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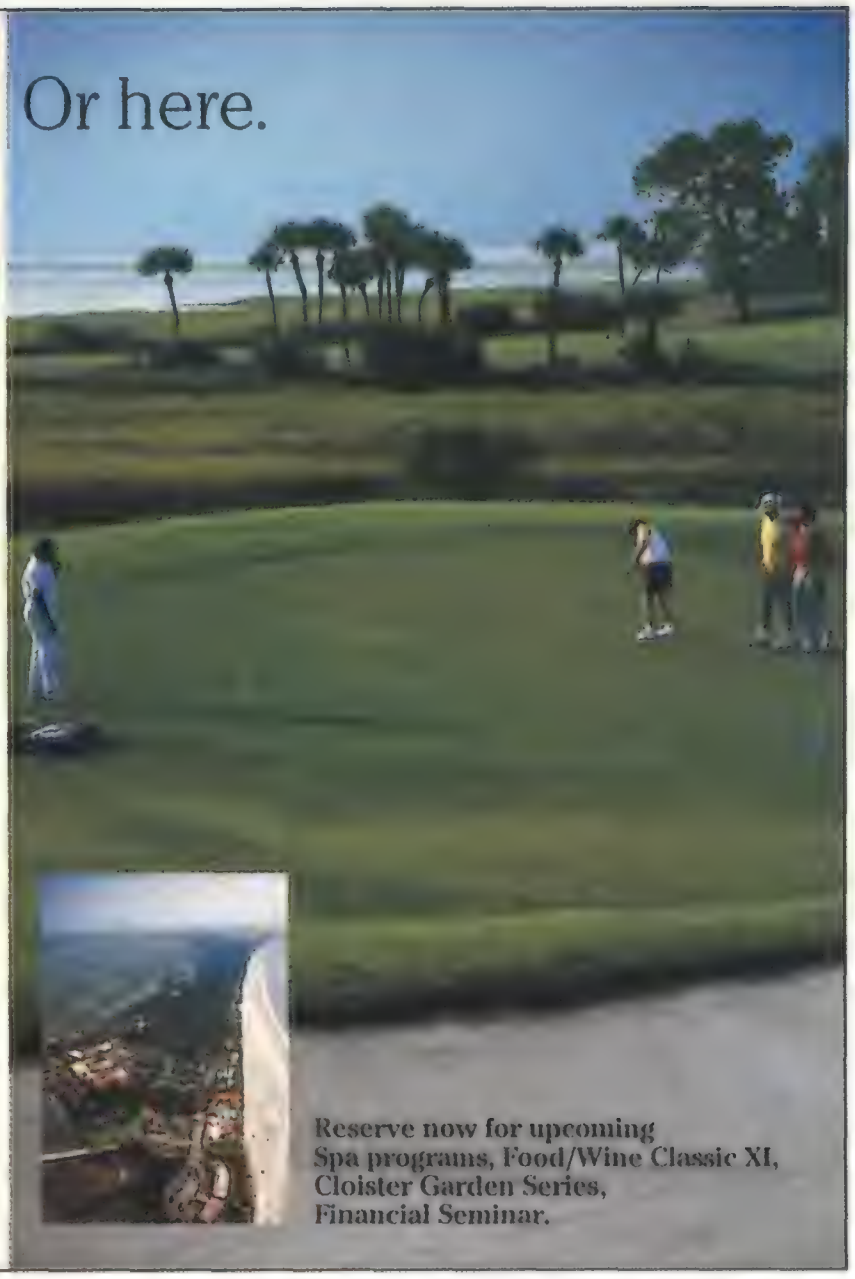

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York's "victims of injustice" in a series of articles, he went out one evening with several "chorus girls." A street-walker named Dora Clark, who joined them later that night, ended up getting arrested for prostitution.

Crane decided to testify on Dora's behalf. A city police commissioner named Theodore Roosevelt advised against it, and so did a reporter and a police sergeant: "If you monkey with this case, you are pretty sure to come out with mud all over you." But Crane insisted, risking his reputation, and his testimony got Dora Clark discharged. Newspaper accounts commended Crane and blasted the police; Crane, the *New York Journal* decided, "was as brave as his [fictional] hero."

But a few weeks later Clark sued the policeman who had nabbed her, Charles Becker, for harassment and arrest without cause. This time, Crane's courtroom experience was not so pleasant. Becker's lawyer accused the novelist of improprieties Crane had not committed. The police searched Crane's room and found an opium outfit hanging on a wall—he'd investigated (and tried) opium to write "Opium's Varied Dreams," a sketch about it. So Becker's lawyer suggested

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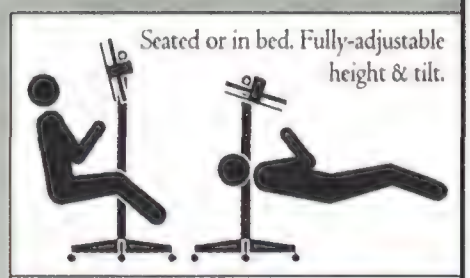

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An accomplished horseman, Crane liked to start out his day with a ride.

that Crane was "stupefied by opium that night . . . and Dora Clark seemed to him an angel." And was it not true, the lawyer asked, that the writer lived on money given to him by prostitutes—that is, was he not a pimp?

He was not. Not a pimp, not an opium addict. But then the lawyer accused Crane of improprieties he *had* committed. He *was* a frequent visitor to a house of ill repute on West 27th Street; he *had* lived with a woman, ostensibly as her husband, for weeks. The next day's *Journal* headlined: "His Bohemian Life in New York Laid Bare for the Sake of Dora Clark." He was an easy target for the rest of his life.

A friend of Crane's wrote that he was "incurably romantic about women. . . . you can always find in [his] behavior a curious trace of chivalry." A trace of chivalry, yes; but also, one could add, a touch of self-destruction. He went for married women, unavailable women, streetwalkers and, later, a madam, as if deliberately trying to damage his own reputation or destroy himself. At some level, he reveled in the sordid and disreputable; no Victorian who was overly concerned with image would repeatedly bring home hookers.

When Crane began his active pursuit of war—and any war would do—Cuba was in revolt against Spain, so he went to Florida to find a boat to take him to Cuba. In Jacksonville he met Cora Stewart Taylor, the golden-haired (if somewhat dumpy) owner of a club called Hotel de Dream.

Cora Taylor came from a "respectable" family in Boston, had traveled extensively and was as deliberately bohemian as Crane himself. At that time, a "nightclub" usually involved prostitution, and Cora had some 12 to 15 girls at the Hotel de Dream. (A list of Jacksonville's brothels gave it a "Class A" rating.) Cora, six years older than Stephen, was an escapee from a failed marriage; her husband refused a divorce. She was impressed by the famous 25-year-old writer. Cora "seemed to know at once that writing was her true profession," according to

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Crane showed the effects of 30 hours in a dinghy after his ship went down.

Crane biographer R. W. Stallman, "and that author Crane was her salvation . . . here to rescue her tarnished soul from that sordid castle of false dreams."

But Crane was off to Cuba—or so he thought. He signed on as a seaman for the steamer *Commodore*, bound for Cuba with a cargo of guns. The ship hit a sandbar less than two miles out from Jacksonville and began to take on water. Having written about shipwrecks, Crane now seemed to relish the situation. The *Commodore*'s cook told a correspondent, "That newspaper feller was a nervy man. He didn't seem to know what fear was."

Crane was among the last off the ship, joining four men in an open dinghy. When one of the other lifeboats foundered, its occupants returned to the sinking *Commodore*. Crane watched as one of those seven doomed sailors simply jumped into the sea. "I could see . . . in the very toss of his head, as he leaped thus to death, that it was rage, rage, rage unspeakable that was in his heart."

Crane's dinghy tossed in the ocean for some 30 hours. In the months to come, he would base "The Open Boat," one of the great short stories in American literature, on that ordeal. In real life, as well as fiction, the captain ran the dinghy through the high waves toward the beach. It capsized and probably struck Higgins, the oiler, who perished in the surf. "In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler," Crane wrote. "His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea."

Crane, still itching to know the taste of war, set sail a few months later for Greece, and the adventurous Cora followed him. Why Greece? Crane had heard that Greece and Turkey were about to fight over the independence of Crete. Like his imaginary Henry Fleming, Crane too dreamed of godlike heroism. "I shall try like blazes to get a decoration out of the thing," he wrote his brother. And it turned out he'd been right about the dual nature of war, its combination of grace and horror too. "The roll of musketry-fire . . . had the wonder of human tragedy in it. It was the most beautiful sound of my experience." The sound of a man being wounded included the "silken, sliding, tender noise of the bullet, and the thud of its impact."

But it was not much of a war: a month of half-hearted defensive actions. Cora's presence hampered Crane, and he saw only one battle. An armistice was signed, and then Crane and Cora moved to England, where they set up housekeeping as apparent husband and wife.

They lived in a large brick villa called Ravensbrook. Crane made friends with a few local writers, including Joseph Conrad, Henry James, H. G. Wells and Ford Madox Ford. The extravagant couple gave the impression of easy wealth—entertaining lavishly, buying a piano, horse, typewriter and newfangled Kodak—while knee-deep in debt. No doubt Crane seemed a bit out of place in a London suburb; at times he would entertain guests while dressed in cowboy pants, wagging a revolver in his hand. In England he wrote stories of the American West (including the classics "The Blue Hotel" and "The Bride

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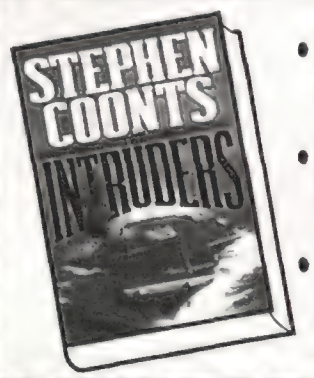

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Comes to Yellow Sky") and looked for a way out.

Then the long-simmering feud over Cuba appeared about ready to boil over and Conrad helped Crane raise enough money to get there. When the United States declared war against Spain in the spring of 1898, Crane tried to sign on as a sailor. He flunked the physical but several days later, as a highly paid correspondent, he was aboard a battleship that was shelling the city of Cabanas. Soon he was under enemy fire at Guantanamo, Las Guasimas, Cuzco and San Juan Hill—a real war at last!

So what was it like? Much like his fictional one, of course. Certainly not, as the public believed, a simple matter of flags and bright banners. As Crane watched the Army push toward Santiago, he wrote, "There wasn't a high heroic face among them; they were all men intent on business. That was all."

Cuba was a grungy war, a torture of insufferable heat, malaria and yellow fever. After only four weeks, three-quarters of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders were too sick to fight. "Regulars Get No Glory" read the title of one

Cora Stewart accompanied Crane to Greece but interfered with his work.

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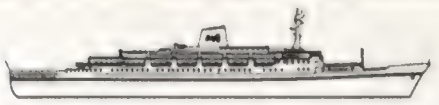

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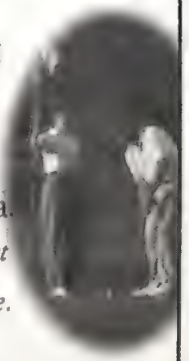

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Crane newspaper piece. When he watched the victorious landing at Daiquiri, he described what that historic occasion meant for the average soldier: it was only "an itch on his shin, a pain in his hand, hunger, thirst, a lack of sleep; the influence of his memory of past firesides, glasses of beer, girls, theaters, ideals, religions, parents, faces, hurts, joys." Another time, Crane wrote of a soldier who was "dying near me. He was dying hard. Hard. It took him a long time to die. . . . But he was going to break. He was going to break."

But if real war was horrible, it was, like the one Crane had imagined, superb as well—or men were, at least. Courageous men were. "I feel that things were often sublime," he wrote. "But . . . they were not of our shallow and preposterous fictions. . . . It was the behavior of men on the street. It was the behavior of men."

Crane himself was one of those courageous men. On one occasion, as bullets whistled by, he calmly sent signal messages by lantern to American ships. On another, he wore a gleaming white raincoat as he went up San Juan Hill. He stood atop one hill, hands in pockets, puffing a pipe until one bullet knocked off his hat and another chipped the case of his field glasses. He hauled guns and supplies for the troops during one battle; in another, he carried wounded men to the rear. Astonishing accounts of his reckless bravery under fire are abundant. To the awed correspondents around him, he simply seemed without fear, but that was not true. When he went out on reconnaissance, he said, he acted "as jaunty as a real soldier, while all the time my heart was in my boots." On another occasion, "I was frightened almost to convulsions." And again, "all that night I was afraid. Bitterly afraid."

If he was so afraid, how could he show such courage? The simplest explanation might be the best: he probably wanted to get himself killed. He told a friend that his fondest desire was to die in battle. By now he almost certainly knew he had tuberculosis and

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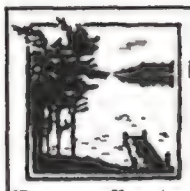

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understood what that meant; TB, of course, was still considered incurable. "He looked like a frayed white ribbon," one reporter wrote.

When he finally returned to England, early in 1899, Cora had a "new" house waiting for him. It was a huge, dank, bat-infested, 500-year-old Sussex mansion called Brede Manor, with no heat except by open fire, no water, no toilets. Another thing awaited him in England—a crushing load of debt. And one last matter: his own death.

Not long after Christmas that same year, Brede Manor was home to a house party. The festivities lasted three days; some 40 guests ate some 40 plum puddings, watched a devised play called "The Ghost," raced on broomsticks around the great hall, and danced until 2 A.M. to music from a live orchestra. At the end the host sat strumming his guitar, fainted against a guest—and then coughed up blood. His lungs had hemorrhaged. H. G. Wells bicycled seven miles in the drizzling dawn to fetch a doctor. Newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic reported the news: Stephen Crane's last days had begun.

Cora was not prepared to believe it. "The lung trouble seems to be over!" she wrote in April. She was still blindly absorbed in restoring Brede Manor. In late May they dragged Crane to a sanatorium in Germany's Black Forest, but he was long past hope. In his feverish dreams he thought he was, again, in an open boat on the indifferent sea.

"For my own part, I am minded to die in my 35th year," Crane had written at 24, after an unhappy affair. "I think that is all I care to stand." As it turned out, he did not have to stand even that much. When he passed away on June 5, 1900, he was nearly seven years shy of his goal. "What a brutal, needless extinction—what an unmitigated, unredeemed catastrophe!" Henry James lamented. But as Crane himself once said, "one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls . . . who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people."

John Huston's 1951 film *The Red Badge of Courage* starred Audie Murphy (in bandanna) as Henry Fleming, and cartoonist Bill Mauldin (with bayonet).

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Book Reviews

Doctors on Horseback
James Thomas Flexner
Fordham University Press, $20

As Long As Life
Mary Canaga Rowland, M.D.
Edited by F. A. Loomis
Storm Peak Press, $11.95

The woman in the backwoods Kentucky cabin had been suffering excruciating labor pains, but still the baby wouldn't come. When the ninth and then the tenth month passed with no sign of birth, her doctors summoned the surgeon said to be the best on the frontier, Dr. Ephraim McDowell of Danville, Kentucky. The year was 1809.

From the perspective of today, the medicine practiced in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was medieval. Anesthesia was unknown. The best medical minds considered purging and bleeding to be the most effective remedies for fevers; in extreme cases, as much as four-fifths of a patient's blood was drained off. Surgery was limited to simple operations on the extremities, where vital organs would not be exposed to infection.

Dr. McDowell, examining the poor woman by candlelight, realized quickly that she wasn't pregnant. She had a large ovarian tumor. The prevailing medical wisdom, he explained to her, was that she would inevitably die in a year or maybe two. Some physicians, he added, had contemplated surgery in such cases, but none had tried it. Opening the abdomen, they believed, was certain to result in a fatal infection of the abdominal wall. McDowell, however, thought there was a chance that an operation could result in a complete cure. If she was willing, he told her, he would operate, but it would require a 60-mile trip by horseback to his home. She agreed to do it.

The doctor knew that he could lose his practice and perhaps even be prosecuted if the woman died. His partner at first declined to assist him, and the townfolk talked of forcibly preventing him from operating. McDowell decided to perform the surgery on Christmas Day, when most people were at church. But when the churchgoers emerged and realized that the operation was under way, they gathered outside the doctor's house and screamed threats while the brave patient clenched her fists and tried to sing hymns. The sheriff kept the crowd from rushing the house.

McDowell coolly removed 15 pounds of "a dirty, gelatinous-looking substance" and a 7.5-pound growth in a 25-minute operation, then stitched up the incision. The crowd cheered on hearing the news, but five days elapsed before the doctor knew for certain that the danger of infection was past. The woman recovered fully, and a month later she was back doing chores and taking care of her five children.

McDowell's pioneering surgery, described by James Thomas Flexner in a reissue of his exciting 1937 book *Doctors on Horseback*, was one of the most important operations in medical history. It stilled the fear of infection that had allowed thousands to die untreated. Appendectomies, kidney surgery and dozens of other operations are "lineal descendants," Flexner writes, of this one bold stroke in the Kentucky wilderness.

Flexner tells several other fine stories in his well-researched, if occasionally overwritten, account of the early years of American medicine. One of the best is the saga of another frontier doctor, William Beaumont, and his lifelong effort to understand the digestive system by studying a patient whose stomach was blown open by a shotgun and never healed over. When Alexis St. Martin recovered from the near-fatal shooting, Beaumont persuaded him to serve as a kind of living laboratory, a cutaway model of the stomach's anatomy and functioning. Watching the man's stomach at work, Beaumont produced the most accurate descriptions of the organ's interior before the use of x-rays, and demonstrated the crucial importance of gastric juice in digestion.

The trouble was that St. Martin, who

was healthy enough to work and raise a family, never stopped squirming uncomfortably in the role of guinea pig. He wanted a life of his own. The demanding, self-righteous physician and the unlearned, irresponsible patient came to loathe each other. Despite a contract that obliged him to "obey, suffer and comply with all reasonable or proper orders or experiments" in return for room, board and cash, St. Martin fled, only to be coaxed back and then to flee again. When he died, 28 years after Beaumont's death, his financially strapped family was determined to leave him in peace at last. They turned down doctors' requests to autopsy the body and exhibit the celebrated stomach.

A chapter titled "The Death of Pain" chronicles the long wrangle among four medical men—two dentists, a small-town Southern doctor and a high-profile lecturer—over credit for the discovery, in the 1840s, of the anesthetic properties of ether. The doctors in Flexner's pages were touchy about things like credit. It was a time when physicians competed for the public's attention and trade as diet savants do nowadays. It turned out that the mildest-mannered of the four claimants to the ether laurels, a Georgian named Crawford Long, had the best case. He and his friends were in the habit of getting drunk on ether, which was a common drug before it was an anesthetic, and Long noticed that they felt no pain when under its influence. In 1842 he administered ether to a patient while removing a tumor from the man's neck, and it was thus that pain during surgery was finally conquered. The unseemly squabble for credit ultimately unhinged the other three contenders—one committed suicide, another wound up in an asylum, and the third suffered a series of nervous breakdowns.

When Flexner's pioneering doctors weren't arguing over credit, they were busy refining ways to libel one another. Daniel Drake, founder of one of the first medical schools west of the Alleghenies, in Cincinnati, had a special gift for insulting his rivals. When one confronted him on the street and sneered, "I do not propose to step aside for a fool," Drake deftly stepped to one side and replied, "I will."

Dr. Mary Rowland, whose book *As Long As Life* recounts a medical career in the West of the early 1900s, had more

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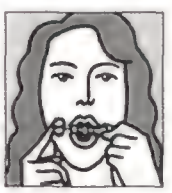

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important matters to worry about than credit or competition. Dr. Rowland, who comes off as tougher than a platoon of Texas Rangers, had to battle for simple respect as a woman practitioner. Men often took one look at the long-skirted, bonneted Mary Rowland and concluded they knew more about doctoring than she did. She blazed trails of a kind different from Drs. McDowell and Beaumont's, toughing it out with skill, patience and stamina.

Rowland always had a no-nonsense way about her. The photographs show a strong, blocky woman with her jaw set in a don't-mess-with-me expression. When she zeroed in on a potential husband, she wrote him with characteristic directness, announcing that she "was ready to marry and if he was not interested there was a man nearer home I could love very easily." Her first choice, also a doctor, had the good sense to go along with the lady he always called "the new woman." When he was murdered, somewhat mysteriously, in his early 30s, Rowland moved her practice to another Kansas town and then to Idaho and Oregon, finally settling in Salem.

Her book is a shambling, loosely organized collection of anecdotes that sometimes shade into self-indulgence, but it's a one-of-a-kind story. She practiced under conditions of isolation and hardship almost unimaginable today. "When my husband—and I later—began to practice medicine in northwestern Kansas," she recalls, "we were about halfway between Kansas City and Denver where the nearest hospitals were, three or four hundred miles away. At times we sent patients to Kansas City . . . but for the most part we took care of them in homes or at our office, with no help except from family members. There were no dentists except the doctor or the barber." She treated one woman who hitched up a wagon team to carry her across a muddy morass and then promptly gave birth. She doctored gunfight victims and accepted livestock and potatoes as payment.

In that frontier world, she took everything in stride. "Fifteen miles southeast of Herndon," she writes matter-of-factly, "I took care of a man who had received a severe head injury. He . . . owned a large ranch. . . . His son worked for him and lived in the same house. His son had a wife and several children, but the older man's wife had died.

"The father had a habit of telling ob-

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scene stories while seated at the breakfast table. The son had warned him several times to desist, but the old fellow must have had a mean streak for he persisted. One morning the son became so exasperated that he picked the old man up and threw him out of the door. The wagon was standing in front of the house and his head struck the wheel and knocked him unconscious, tearing a great wound in his scalp. The son was so angry that he offered no aid. The old fellow lay there until four o'clock in the afternoon when he finally dragged himself to a neighbor who sent for me.

"When I arrived he began to quibble about who should pay for my services . . . [he] had bled so much that he could hardly sit in a chair. He finally decided that if I would take a cow in payment he would have me take care of him."

And the weather, in those days of house calls, could be a formidable foe. "One call I made, I remember very well. It was winter," Rowland recounts, "had been snowing all day, and the wind was drifting the snow into great mounds covering the roads. I had to go some fifteen miles from Herndon to see a man ill with typhoid fever. The sun was going down as I arrived at his home, which meant a night drive back to Herndon.

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There were moments, as she recalls, when one must have had to laugh. There was, for instance, the day when a young woman had visited Rowland's husband complaining of stomach pains. The doctor told her she was pregnant. The girl denied having had sex, then stammered, "No sir, no sir, we only tried it once and then just for a moment."

It is difficult to imagine Dr. Rowland herself breaking into a smile during such an exchange, or any other for that matter, but she may have yielded to a quick grin when a 10-year-old boy came to her with an injured finger, explaining, "I know'd yore a woman and you'd be careful."

Donald Dale Jackson is a writer based in rural Connecticut.

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Additional Reading

Phenomena (p. 14)

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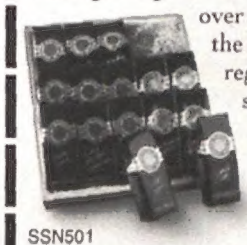

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By Daniel Pinkwater

How Sheriff Bob made me into an explorer of the world beyond TV

I had a regular routine as a fifth-grader. After school, I declined to participate in healthy outdoor activities and settled down in front of the TV. My favorite program then—and to this day—was the afternoon Western movie, hosted by Col. Tim McCoy. McCoy, who had been a genuine cowboy, and a genuine lieutenant colonel, was a student of Indian sign language, had a successful career as a movie star and was the handsomest man who ever lived.

During his Army days in the West, McCoy had sought out and interviewed surviving badmen, lawmen and formerly hostile Indian chiefs. During breaks in the movie, he would fill in the audience vis-à-vis reality versus Hollywood, demonstrate authentic gunfighting technique (sneak up from behind), explain trick riding and share his collection of photographs of famous outlaws, usually on mortuary slabs with lots of holes in them.

Toward the end of his life, he wrote a book, *Tim McCoy Remembers the West*, which leaves the reader wishing he'd written a few more. I got all the way through college hoping to stumble on something as good as that TV show, and never did. Colonel McCoy knew all about everything.

I'd also watch the daily cartoon show, presided over by Sheriff Bob, the usual staff announcer doubling as the kiddie host. Sheriff Bob conducted a weekly contest for his viewers. Send in a postcard with the correct answer to the question of the week, and you'd have a shot at winning a brand-new bike. The questions were pathetic and I knew that I, as a member of Colonel McCoy's seminar, was unfairly competing with younger and weaker kids, but I sent in my entry regularly, just the same. I qualified for the bike drawing with the successful completion of the line: "Little boy blue, come blow your _____!"

The following Monday, Sheriff Bob reached into the hopper, drew out a postcard and read out my name. I experienced a moment of unreality, but in a week or so it came: a big carton containing a three-speed, lightweight Schwinn bicycle of beautiful red. It was unassembled, of course.

The carton had to stand untouched in the front hall for a while, having arrived during the solemn high holiday of Yom Kippur. This was the one time of the year during which my father became fanatically religious, left off eating ham and dragged me, wearing my annual new itchy wool suit, to the synagogue. (It is a well-known fact that the high holidays, although they come in the fall, are invariably accompanied by a hot spell—and yet the synagogue windows are always closed tight, the heating system is turned on, and the children are dressed in garments suitable for an Alpine bivouac.) In addition to spending whole days in the synagogue, thinking about Colonel McCoy's vivid description of his experiences in the Arapaho sweat lodge, I was required to keep the wretched suit on at home and refrain from doing anything undignified or normal or enjoyable.

With the end of the Yom Kippur ordeal, it was necessary to wait until the weekend, when my father would assemble the bicycle. Finally, he dug the family monkey wrench and a pair of pliers out of a kitchen drawer, and ripped open the carton. My father was the other person known to me, aside from Tim McCoy, who knew everything. Like Colonel Tim, he had been an eyewitness to history and consorted with desperadoes. There was some opinion within the family that he might have *been* a desperado. He was also said to have been a cyclist *extraordinaire* in Warsaw, riding with arms crossed and a cigarette in his mouth in the Krasinsich Garden, able to cruise to a halt and dismount without touching a hand to the machine. Putting together the components of a Schwinn bicycle would be the work of a few minutes, for him.

My father liked to confront challenges alone. This may have been a throwback to his wild days in Poland, when such feats of daring as he might undertake were best undertaken without witnesses. So as was usual when he was going to build something, or repair something, I was sent to the other end of the house and cautioned not to come back until I was sent for.

Hours passed. I heard my father grunting and cursing in the front hall. Then, from a window that looked out onto the street, I saw him making a number of trips to the car, with parts of my new, red bicycle in his hands. Then he got in and drove away.

Later: "Tomorrow go to deh bicycle shop. Here's deh ticket. I remembered I didn't hev it a pump to pump up deh tires, so I took it dere, deh whole ting—let him put it togedder, deh bicycle guy. Go. In deh afternoon vill be raddy."

The next day, I turned up at the shop as I had been instructed. There it was—in one piece. Magnificent. I had never ridden a bicycle in my life. The mechanic gave me a few pointers on the sidewalk outside the shop, and somehow I managed to wobble home, not falling off very many times.

After that, I spent all of my afternoons mounted, exploring a dramatically expanded world. I dropped out of Colonel McCoy's class. Passive observation and scholarship can go only so far. Sooner or later, you have to start making your own history.

There are larger works of art. But none that hang so well on turns.

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